

who was married to a Comnene princess. Ottoman efforts to subdue the Muslim emirates of Anatolia would come to seem insignificant by comparison with the struggle to control eastern Anatolia which was now beginning. Uzun Hasan considered Trebizond to be within his sphere of influence and late in 1460 he sent his nephew as envoy to Sultan Mehmed, cautioning him that he considered the kingdom his own prize, and warning the Sultan not to attempt to dispossess the Comnene dynasty. Mehmed ignored the warning and, supported by the armies of his Muslim vassals the İsfendiyaroğulları of Kastamonu and the Karamanids, the next year moved east with the object of annexing this last remaining Byzantine enclave in Anatolia (which small as it was called itself an empire). Uzun Hasan sent troops to hinder his progress, but little was achieved on either side in this first confrontation between these two ambitious rulers.

The Comnene lands were cut off from the Anatolian hinterland by high, inhospitable mountains. A janissary who served with the Ottoman army on the Trebizond campaign recalled the difficulties of the march – the distance, the hostility of the local population to the Ottoman advance in a region where the steep, forested terrain favoured the nimble rather than the heavily-armed soldier, hunger, and the incessant rain which turned the route to mud. He related how a camel laden with gold coins fell on the pass down to the city, scattering the treasure everywhere: Sultan Mehmed gave the order for anyone who could to pick up the gold pieces and keep them. But this was insufficient incentive:

... before we came down from that mountain we had plenty of trouble: the earth was as sticky as porridge and the Janissaries had to carry the Emperor [i.e. the Sultan] in their arms all the way to the plain and the treasure camels remained in the mountains. Emperor Mehmed begged the Janissaries to make an effort to get the camels down to the plain and we had to go back up the mountain with great effort and struggle all night before we got them down to the plain. The Emperor stayed there that day resting and gave the Janissaries 50,000 gold pieces to divide among themselves and he raised the wages of the Janissary centurions.⁵⁰

Trebizond surrendered after a six-week siege by Ottoman land and sea forces. In Islamic law, those who surrender in a military engagement should be allowed to go free; initially, therefore, the Emperor and his family were spared, and held in Edirne – but (except for his daughter Anna who entered Mehmed's harem)⁵¹ were executed two years later. Blame for the Ottomans' easy victory was laid by some at the door of the Trebizond treasurer, George Amirutzes, who negotiated the surrender of the enclave with the Ottoman grand vezir Mahmud Pasha, who was his cousin.⁵² Amirutzes continued his career at the Ottoman court like a number of other learned Greeks and

members of the Byzantine aristocracy. He became philosopher-royal and amanuensis to the Sultan; his major contribution was to combine into a whole the scattered charts of the classical Greek geographer Ptolemy, whose work was adopted as one of the bases of Islamic and, later, Ottoman and Renaissance cartography.⁵³ With the removal of the Comnene dynasty from Trebizond, Mehmed completed the reunification under Ottoman rule of all but a few pockets of the territory which had been ruled by Byzantium from Constantinople until the time of the Fourth Crusade in 1204.

Annexation of the Venetian maritime colonies remained an Ottoman objective, for although Venice was unable to pose a direct strategic threat to the Ottomans after their capture of Constantinople, it retained a nuisance value because of its strong navy. The Ottoman–Venetian relationship had always been dogged by mutual suspicion, but full-scale war had usually been avoided. Commercial considerations and the knowledge that the other crusading powers would doubtless leave it isolated made Venice reluctant to provoke the Ottomans, until their conquest of Bosnia in 1463 endangered Venetian possessions on the Adriatic. Other Venetian colonies – principally Corfu, Methoni, Euboea and Naxos – became vulnerable as the Ottomans attacked Venetian territory around Nafpaktos (Lepanto), a vital base for naval operations in the Adriatic. Emboldened by the hope that it might find an ally in Hungary, whose security was equally threatened by the loss of Bosnia, Venice declared war on the Sultan in July 1463.

In the early stages of the war much of the Peloponnese again came under Venetian control. In the autumn of 1463 King Matthias of Hungary invaded Bosnia and the next year his troops defeated an army commanded by Mehmed who retired on hearing that the King was again moving south across the river Sava. The Pope and the Duke of Burgundy made a three-year commitment to an anti-Ottoman crusade (albeit this venture was short-lived: by the end of 1464 it, like so many other alliances in crusading history, had crumbled in discord).⁵⁴ Though the Venetians failed to recapture the north Aegean island of Lesbos from the Ottomans in the same year, it was seen merely as a setback, and Venice was not inclined to accept the peace overtures of Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha.⁵⁵

Venice remained a problem, and not only in the Peloponnese. Between Ottoman Macedonia and the Venetian strongholds of the Adriatic coast lay the fragmented buffer of Scanderbeg's mountainous Albania. On various occasions since re-embracing Christianity and renouncing his Ottoman allegiance by rebelling against Murad II, Scanderbeg had sought Latin patronage in his bid to remain independent of the encroaching Ottomans. Naples had been his protector since 1451 but on the death of King Alfonso in 1458 he again acknowledged Ottoman suzerainty. The outbreak of the

Venetian-Ottoman war in 1463 gave him another chance to break free of the Ottomans and he offered his services to Venice. After a couple of years of localized warfare, Mehmed launched a full-scale campaign against Scanderbeg and in the summer of 1466, in only 25 days, the Ottoman built the great fortress of Ilbasan where the main route linking the Ottoman Balkans with the Adriatic coast, the former Via Egnatia, reaches the coastal plain. Scanderbeg's stronghold of Krujé lay isolated to the north, no longer able to make overland contact with Venetian forces on the coast. During the winter Scanderbeg sought material help in Italy, and in the following year attacked the Ottoman besiegers of Krujé. This prompted a second campaign by Mehmed which resulted in all Albania – bar a few Venetian outposts – coming under Ottoman rule. Scanderbeg himself, for so long the leader of Albanian resistance to the Ottomans, fled to Venetian territory where he died in 1468. Although the exercise of Ottoman authority in this inhospitable region was tenuous, Hungary and Venice were no longer able to exploit the volatility of the lesser Albanian lords to their advantage.⁵⁶

Although Mehmed II is thought of by western historians primarily as the architect of the Ottoman push into Europe, he spent much of his reign defending his eastern frontier. Uzun Hasan's caution to Mehmed over Trebizond in 1460 proved the precursor to a more aggressive policy, for he soon sent an envoy to Venice to propose co-operation in Venice's war against the Ottomans. The strongest card in his suit was his promise to repeat Tamerlane's success in breaking up the Ottoman domains: Venice agreed that he should keep whatever territory he could win in Anatolia.

By the mid-fifteenth century the long and acrimonious relationship between the Ottoman and Karamanid states had reached an impasse. The death in 1464 of Mehmed's vassal Ibrahim Bey of Karaman left Karaman open to the competing claims of the Ottomans and the Akkoyunlu. Uzun Hasan seized the chance to regain the initiative against the Ottomans by intervening in Karaman on behalf of Ibrahim's eldest son Ishak and delivering the state to him. Both Uzun Hasan and Ishak accepted Mamluk protection hoping for an ally against Mehmed's inevitable response, which was not long delayed: with Ottoman support, another of Ibrahim's sons, Pir Ahmed, drove Ishak to seek refuge with Uzun Hasan. The death of Ishak soon afterwards deprived Uzun Hasan of his pretext for intervention in Karaman and temporarily halted his plans to emulate Tamerlane.⁵⁷

Soon, however, while the cream of the Ottoman army was engaged on the western fringes of the empire, Uzun Hasan, on the eastern frontier, was adding huge swathes of territory to that he had acquired through his

annexation of the lands of the rival Karakoyunlu tribal confederation in 1467. Over the next two years he established his rule over Azerbaijan, Iraq, Fars and Kirman and beyond, into the Timurid homelands further east, which radically altered the balance of power in eastern Anatolia, and made Uzun Hasan a vastly more formidable rival than when he had been merely a tribal chief.⁵⁸

In 1468 Uzun Hasan sent an embassy to the new Mamluk sultan Qa'it Bay to assure himself of Mamluk protection against the Ottomans.⁵⁹ Two contemporary writers, the Venetian historian Domenico Malipiero and the Ottoman Tursun Bey, report independently that Sultan Mehmed planned to march into Mamluk Syria in 1468.⁶⁰ However, when his vassal Pir Ahmed of Karaman failed to provide the obligatory assistance in this campaign, Mehmed directed his army against Karaman instead. It is not clear what prompted Pir Ahmed to make such a wrong-headed decision, because the forces of Karaman were no match for Mehmed, who succeeded in bringing most Karamanid territory north of the Taurus mountain range under his control. Uzun Hasan was preoccupied with his own imperial designs in the east and could not intervene to help Pir Ahmed.

From 1469, once he had despatched the Timurid ruler Abu Sa'id, Uzun Hasan was lord of the most extensive territories in the region and successor to the Karakoyunlu and Timurid states. With domains comprising most of modern Iran and Iraq and much of eastern Anatolia, Uzun Hasan was master of an empire to rival that of Sultan Mehmed and in June of that year he stated his claims to be the sole legitimate Islamic sovereign in a proclamation to Qa'it Bay.⁶¹ This was a challenge both to the Mamluks, as guardians of the Holy Places of Islam in Mecca and Medina to which all Muslims were required to make pilgrimage, and to Sultan Mehmed's aspirations to leadership of the Islamic world. Even after his conquest of Constantinople Mehmed had been content to leave matters relating to the pilgrimage to the Mamluks, seeing his own duty as temporal, that of extending the Islamic lands.⁶²

Uzun Hasan's psychological warfare intensified. He competed with Mehmed at the spiritual as well as the temporal level, referring in a letter to the Sultan of 1471 to his recent conquest Shiraz, in southern Iran, as 'the throne of the caliphate'.⁶³ This claim did not greatly exercise Mehmed, for the office of caliph had long fallen into abeyance, but Uzun Hasan's evocation of the spectre of Tamerlane was more alarming. One of Uzun Hasan's commanders wrote to the Ottoman governor of Sivas drawing a comparison between the Akkoyunlu leader and Tamerlane – he found Uzun Hasan superior on fourteen counts, which included the full range of attributes desirable to support a ruler's claims to legitimacy in this part of

the world. Uzun Hasan made his concerns topical, by criticizing the administrative policies of the Ottomans, such as the collection from Muslim tribesmen of the poll-tax – which was only supposed to be paid by non-Muslims – and the forced sedentarization of the tribes to make them part of the settled peasantry, which was an important aspect of the Ottoman policy of subduing eastern Anatolia.⁶⁴ Uzun Hasan's claims to ancient Turkish lineage were a determined response to Ottoman emphasis on their own Central Asian origins in histories written at this time.⁶⁵

When Sultan Mehmed sent an army against what remained of Karaman in 1471, Pir Ahmed fled to Uzun Hasan, but Pir Ahmed's Turcoman allies failed to defend the Taurus passes against the Ottomans, and an Ottoman fleet annexed a Karamanid client enclave around the port of Alanya in south-west Anatolia. The next year the Ottomans captured Karamanid strongholds to the east of Silifke on the southern coast of Anatolia but, to the west, their own port of Antalya, 'the greatest and most famous sea-port in Asia' according to Malipiero,⁶⁶ was burnt in retaliation by a Christian fleet newly allied with Uzun Hasan. The Ottoman port of Izmir on the west coast of Anatolia was burnt by a Venetian fleet that also torched Gelibolu in an audacious strike that breached the Dardanelles fortifications so recently constructed by Mehmed to protect Istanbul.

In July 1472 Uzun Hasan again announced his intention to intervene to save what remained of Karaman from the Ottomans, demanding that Mehmed withdraw and also that he hand over Trebizond. Like Tamerlane's court, Uzun Hasan's gave refuge to dispossessed Anatolian princes who there planned the reconquest of their former territories under the eye of a powerful patron: at this time Pir Ahmed of Karaman was one such and Uzun Hasan's nephew, son of the dispossessed ruler of Sinop on the north Anatolian coast, another. By the time Mehmed left Istanbul, he had learned that an army under the command of another of Uzun Hasan's nephews, Yusuf Mirza, was approaching the former Ottoman capital of Bursa, having made substantial territorial gains in its progress across Anatolia. Superior Ottoman strength forced a retreat, Yusuf Mirza was captured, and Pir Ahmed of Karaman, who was with him, fled.

An incursion by Uzun Hasan across the Euphrates into the northern Mamluk lands late in 1472 briefly served to unite Mamluks and Ottomans against him. The immediate provocation for this campaign may have been related to a conflict which arose over whether the palanquin of the Mamluks from Cairo, or that of Uzun Hasan (as possessor of the former seat of the caliphate, Baghdad), should take precedence in the ceremonies relating to the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. As a result of this campaign Uzun Hasan temporarily gained control of the Taurus passes to the Mediterranean where

his seaborne Venetian allies were active.⁶⁷ Uzun Hasan's aggressive posturing gave Sultan Mehmed good reason to fear the Venetian-Akkoyunlu pact, but his invitation to Venice and Hungary to send envoys to Istanbul to discuss peace may have been a feint to isolate Uzun Hasan from his European allies.

Uzun Hasan's incursion into Mamluk Syria in 1472 led Sultan Mehmed to think the time ripe for a full-scale campaign against the Akkoyunlu leader. On 4 August 1473 the two armies met on the Euphrates east of Erzincan in an inconclusive encounter which caused the Ottomans great loss. A week later, on 11 August, they met again at Başkent, in the mountains to the north; Uzun Hasan fled at the sight of an Ottoman army well-supplied, unlike his own, with cannon and hand-guns, and his forces were routed.⁶⁸ For a quarter of a century Ottoman familiarity with the weapons of the gunpowder age gave them the advantage over their eastern rivals.

Uzun Hasan lost little territory by his defeat, as Sultan Mehmed did not follow up his victory. For the Ottomans, the determined resistance of foes who were opposed to the extension of their rule in this direction was compounded by the logistical challenge of conducting military operations in the inhospitable terrain of their eastern frontiers. Aware of the problems of holding their gains here, Ottoman commanders often pulled back to more defensible borders. Uzun Hasan's defeat at the hands of a ruler who, like him, claimed divine inspiration had the significant effect of undermining his prestige and his claims, and Mehmed's reputation was correspondingly enhanced. As was customary after a victory, letters announcing his success to the princes of the Islamic world were despatched. Weapons in the propaganda war, these letters appropriated to Mehmed the hyperbolic epithets formerly applied to Uzun Hasan when his power seemed to be in the ascendant. Internal rebellion was a more immediate and practical consequence of Uzun Hasan's defeat.⁶⁹

Uzun Hasan's removal from the scene gave the Ottomans the opportunity to annex the ever-troublesome state of Karaman once and for all and in 1474 the commander Gedik ('Fortress-builder')⁷⁰ Ahmed Pasha was sent with an army to conquer the Karamanid heartland in the Taurus mountains and to take the fortresses captured by the Karamanids with the help of their crusading allies. Ottoman administrative policy sought to reduce tribal chiefs to the status of provincial cavalrymen and to encourage their followers to settle in villages and towns, but the tribal population of Karaman – particularly the Turgudlu and Varsak Turcomans – proved especially reluctant to accept the new order. Hard to pacify, they held out in their mountain fastnesses beyond the turn of the century, evading Ottoman

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inspectors sent as and when local conditions permitted to assess the taxable resources of the new province.

Sultan Mehmed gave the development of his navy a high priority. From earliest times the Ottomans and the other Anatolian emirates had used the seas as a line of defence. The Ottomans had built dockyards when they first gained a coastline on the Sea of Marmara in the mid-fourteenth century, once they had crossed into Thrace, the need to defend themselves against the Venetians in particular gave naval matters a new urgency. A large dockyard at Gelibolu in the 1390s⁷¹ was augmented by the dockyards built in the emirates of the Anatolian Aegean coast once these were annexed by the Ottomans. Yet although the Ottoman navy gradually began to enjoy successes against the Venetians and Genoese in coastal waters, and could carry out raiding expeditions over longer distances, it was no match for the warships of these two trading powers in close battle in the open seas. After he took Constantinople Sultan Mehmed established a large dockyard in the Golden Horn, using the fleet of war vessels built there to gain control of the Black Sea basin, and also to carry his ambition further afield across the Mediterranean. The new balance of power coming into being demanded versatility, and Mehmed had to meet the challenge of projecting Ottoman might over ever-greater distances at sea as well as on land.

In 1475 an armada under the command of Gedik Ahmed Pasha, now grand vezir, sailed to the Crimea and annexed Caffa and other lesser Genoese possessions as well as the Venetian port at Tana. Following the establishment of a presence in the Crimea, a smaller Ottoman fleet sailed for the north-eastern Black Sea and captured the fortresses of Kuba, near the outlet of the Sea of Azov, and Anapa, on the coast to the east of the Crimea, from their Latin lords.⁷² The southern littoral of the Crimean peninsula was thereafter an Ottoman sub-province which probably also included Tana (now Azov), Kuba and Anapa. In 1478, on resolution of a twelve-year succession struggle among the sons of Haci Giray Khan, the remainder of the Crimean lands accepted Ottoman overlordship with Mengli Giray as khan.⁷³

The annexation of territory by the Ottoman Empire was not infrequently occasioned by infighting among claimants to the throne of a vassal state, as had happened when the rivalry among the heirs of Ibrahim Bey of Karaman after his death in 1464 precipitated direct Ottoman intervention and hastened the end of Karamanid independence; disputes in hitherto independent states could also present the Ottomans, as the strongest power in the region, with the opportunity to intervene and impose vassaldom. The Tatars were set apart from other Ottoman vassals by their descent from

Genghis Khan; this was signified by the fact that where other vassals paid tribute to the sultan, the Tatar khan received an annual stipend and other emoluments in recognition of his unique status.⁷⁴ The Tatars had much to contribute: their horsemen were admired for their speed and agility, and played a vital role in Ottoman campaigning armies in both east and west.

Following their conquest of Constantinople and hold on the Straits the Ottomans were the strongest power in the Black Sea basin. It seems that they understood that attempting to conquer and hold the boundless, arid steppelands to the north of the Black Sea would be out of the question, and in the succeeding years they efficiently took over the Latin trading colonies situated at strategic points around its coasts to give them control of the commerce passing through them. After Crimea became an Ottoman client, Ottoman influence in the affairs of the northern Black Sea region and the ability to manipulate them to its own advantage increased.⁷⁵

As Sultan Mehmed gradually achieved his strategic aims in the west, Ottoman territory increasingly formed a compact block, with only a few isolated fortresses remaining in enemy hands. Although Mehmed's attempts to reduce Nafpaktos failed, Krujé and Shkodër in northern Albania surrendered to the Ottomans in 1478 and 1479 respectively, the latter despite determined resistance from its Venetian garrison. Attacks on Venice – intended to forestall any Venetian military operations on the Ottoman north-west frontier – increasingly took the form of devastating raids which, in the mid-1470s, penetrated deep into Friuli towards the city itself. Uzun Hasan's death in 1478 contributed to Venice's decision to sue for the peace which was concluded in 1479. In the final stage of hostilities the Ionian islands of Cephalonia, Santa Maura and Zante, in possession of the Tocco family, clients of the king of Naples, were seized by the Ottomans. Following the peace with Venice, Ottoman raiding took a new and aggressive direction, into Transylvania and what is today southern Austria. These raids were conducted by the irregular light cavalry known as *akıncı*, who were rewarded with the lion's share of the booty they captured. A vital part of the Ottoman military, they numbered some 50,000 men, both Muslim and Christian, during Mehmed's reign.⁷⁶

Most daring of all, however, were the major naval operations undertaken against the Knights Hospitallers of St John on the island of Rhodes in the eastern Mediterranean and the kingdom of Naples at Otranto on the Italian mainland during the summer of 1480. Rhodes was the most dangerous of the remaining Latin outposts in the Ottoman southern seas, and an anachronism in Ottoman eyes; moreover, it had aided Venice in the recent war. Apart from the nuisance value of its piracy, the strategic location of the island on the sea route from Istanbul to Egypt gave Mehmed

reason enough to wish to conquer it. The Ottomans now felt as confident at sea as their Mediterranean neighbours, and the reduction of Rhodes was seen as an essential preliminary to naval operations against Egypt and Syria in support of the land invasion of Mamluk territory which the Sultan was said by Tursun Bey to have been planning.⁷⁷ But the siege, a combined naval and land operation, and a severe test of Sultan Mehmed's navy, ended in failure. The Knights had long anticipated a siege and had reinforced the defences of the island accordingly. The Ottoman fleet was commanded by a Byzantine renegade, Mesih Pasha. He reached the harbour of Marmaris on the Anatolian mainland opposite Rhodes, on 23 May and ferried the army of 60,000 men – who had marched overland from Istanbul – to the island, where they camped overlooking the town. After two failed assaults the Ottoman cannon and mortars bombarded the town and miners dug trenches. The defenders still resisted and rejected Mesih Pasha's offer of peace. A further Ottoman assault on 28 July failed, and the besiegers retreated with great loss of life. By mid-August two ships sent to the aid of the Knights by King Ferrante of Naples reached the island with the news that the Pope had promised to send help. This caused Mesih Pasha to embark his troops and sail back to Istanbul.

At the very time that Ferrante's two ships were sailing to assist the Knights, an Ottoman fleet under Gedik Ahmed Pasha was setting out from the southern Adriatic port of Vlorë (Valona) to attack his territory. The fortress of Otranto, only a day's sail away, fell within two weeks. The arrival of Ottoman troops on Italian soil induced frantic diplomatic activity among the Italian states, who seemed inclined for once to forget their rivalries and unite in their common defence.⁷⁸ Whether this attack on the south Italian mainland was a first step towards the fulfilment of an ambition to capture the seat of the popes at Rome remains a matter of speculation, since Mehmed had died before his intentions became clear. Among the titles Sultan Mehmed claimed for himself was that of 'Roman Caesar', signifying his aspiration to succeed to the mantle of the Byzantine Empire at the height of its greatness under Constantine and Justinian; whether it was also intended to communicate that he had designs on Rome itself is disputed. After Constantinople, the capture of Rome represented the ultimate prize. If Rome was Mehmed's goal, it is surprising that it was not mentioned by Aşıkpaşaçade, a chronicler decidedly in favour of holy wars, and was referred to only in passing by other chronicles written in the fifteenth century.⁷⁹ At the very least, Mehmed did not attempt to secure his foothold on the Italian peninsula as he might have been expected to do if he indeed had designs on Rome: the next year he headed east, not west.

In the last days of April 1481, Sultan Mehmed crossed the Bosphorus to the army mustering-ground at Üsküdar, ready to lead his army through Anatolia. On 3 May, only one stage further on, at a spot near Maltepe known as 'Sultan's Meadow', he died, aged 49, possibly from complications associated with his gout.⁸⁰ Although he had a history of ill-health his death was unexpected, and he had not designated a successor. His thoughts on the subject were contained in the law-code he had promulgated a few years earlier, in which he gave formal sanction to the practice of fratricide, stating that it was appropriate for whichever of his sons became sultan to do away with the others 'for the sake of the good order of the world'.⁸¹

Sultan Mehmed's middle son, Mustafa, had been his favourite, but Mustafa had fallen ill and died in 1474 while governing the newly-conquered province of Karaman from his seat at Konya. Two sons survived: Bayezid, who was prince-governor at Amasya, and Cem, who had succeeded Mustafa in Konya.

In his thirty years in power Sultan Mehmed had fought eighteen campaigns in person. The Ottoman Empire which he created was an extensive mass of land and sea which sat at the hub of the great trading networks of the time. Moribund and depopulated, Byzantine Constantinople had been remade as the flourishing capital of territories that included the Balkan peninsula as far as the Adriatic in the west, the Danube-Sava line in the north, and most of Anatolia. The Black Sea coast marked a relatively safe frontier beyond which there were at this time no states capable of threatening Ottoman power. Rivals still threatened to east and west, but within the limits of Mehmed's state a *pax ottomanica* brought a measure of internal security which was disturbed only by localized brigand activity on land and corsairs at sea.

Control of the ports of the Black Sea brought control over the trade of the vast steppe hinterland extending as far afield as Poland, Lithuania, Muscovy and Iran which, formerly so important to the wealth of Genoa and Venice in particular, now contributed to Ottoman prosperity. Silk came from the northern provinces of Iran to Bursa, the main Ottoman emporium, and from there, most of it went on to the Italian states, either as raw silk or as Bursa silk cloth. Another luxury the Italians imported was mohair from the Angora goat, while with the money they made from the sale of their silk, Iranian merchants bought woollen cloth exported from Europe. Spices from India and Arabia were in transit westwards or for use by the Ottomans.⁸² A study of the customs registers of Feodosiya in the Crimea shortly after Sultan Mehmed's death – when, with the seizure from Moldavia of the Danubian port of Kiliya and the Dniestrian port of Bilhorod in 1484

and the acceptance of vassalage by the Voyvode, the Black Sea became in effect an 'Ottoman lake' – shows the range of goods being traded: cotton and cotton goods, silk goods, woollens, grain and fruit and forest products, raw minerals and worked metals, skins and hides, spices and sugar and honey, dyes and alum.⁸³

Once in possession of an imperial capital, the Ottomans developed the court ceremonial to go with it. Muscovy, mainly trading through Feodosiya, exported luxury furs such as sable, ermine, black fox and lynx which became a vital component of the Ottoman royal image, used for trimming the splendid robes worn at court and presented by the sultan to high dignitaries as a mark of his favour.⁸⁴ Falconry was as much the sport of sultans as of kings, and these birds also were brought south from the steppes to the Ottoman court. The trade in slaves flourished too: the previously sporadic forays of the Crimean Tatars became more regular as they raided northwards into southern Poland and Lithuania in particular, to satisfy the demands of the Ottoman slave market at significant financial profit to themselves – one authority puts at 18,000 the number of captives seized by the Tatars in Poland in their first major raid in 1468, for instance, and in subsequent years the total could be many thousands more.⁸⁵ As the first power to establish an amicable relationship with the people of the steppes, the Ottomans effectively prevented their northern neighbours from entering the Black Sea for years to come and their imposition of stability in the region allowed them to concentrate their attention on other frontiers.⁸⁶

Control of the commercial networks of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea allowed Mehmed to impose customs duties for the benefit of his exchequer. Strategically-deployed agents and middlemen taxed goods in transit through the Ottoman territories as well as those destined for internal consumption. Like his predecessors, Mehmed granted the trading privileges known as 'capitulations' to foreign merchants; the main beneficiaries at this time were the various Italian states. Such privileges were apt to be interrupted during times of war, and in view of the rivalry between them, favour shown to one or other of these states could be a useful weapon in the hands of the sultan.⁸⁷ Foreign merchants reckoned the customs dues imposed under the capillary regime a small price to pay for access to the raw materials available throughout the extensive territory under Ottoman authority. The Ottomans favoured a notional 'command economy', in which their foremost responsibilities were to maximize the wealth in the treasury and prevent shortages in the market-place – especially in Istanbul. Although this principle could only ever be partially implemented, the subordination of economic to political and social priorities which it implies serves to emphasize the different vision of their western trading partners, who seized any opportunity to increase economic

activity and profits. These two economic views complemented each other to the ultimate disadvantage of the Ottomans who could not envision that the western states' eagerness to enter into capitulatory agreements with them would, in later centuries, work to the detriment of their own economic – and political – well-being.

The Ottoman economy was overwhelmingly dependent on agriculture and continued to be so into the twentieth century: even today, 40 per cent of the population of the Turkish Republic is rural. It was only partly monetarized; the value of goods delivered to or services performed for the state and its agents was not easily quantifiable in monetary terms. Some idea of the sources of treasury revenue during Mehmed's reign is given by the contemporary historian Laonicus Chalcocondylas, who considered that the Ottoman treasury derived the greatest proportion of its income from the poll-tax levied on non-Muslims: the policy of allowing subject populations to retain their pre-conquest faith thus brought considerable financial benefit, and this in turn discouraged Muslim proselytizing. Further elements contributing to the balance sheet, he said, were taxes on livestock and agricultural produce, and on trade and mines. Tribute paid by Ottoman vassal states also entered the treasury, as well as monies from the sale of slaves – Islamic law gave the ruler a right to one-fifth of the booty captured in any war against infidels. A final item of income, reported Chalcocondylas, was represented by the 'gifts' made to the sultan by military and other state officials as he set out on campaign every spring: this revenue was again paid out directly to support the sultan's elite troops and his court and government officials.⁸⁸

Military campaigning and the establishment of direct rule in newly-conquered territories were heavy charges on the treasury and the cost of maintaining the state grew as the Ottoman realm expanded and administration became more complex. Even before Sultan Mehmed's reign the standing army of elite troops comprised the infantry janissaries and six regiments of cavalrymen. A contemporary source informs us that at the time of his victory over Uzun Hasan at Baškent in 1473, the janissaries numbered 12,000 and the sultan's cavalry 7,500.⁸⁹ These troops were paid salaries every three months, as were the corps of cannoneers and armourers and the transport corps. By contrast, the provincial cavalrymen, who are usually referred to in English as timariots, were awarded the right to collect peasant taxes, each from a precisely-defined amount of land or fief (*timar*), in exchange for which they were obliged to appear on campaign with their men.

The establishment of Ottoman administration across the empire took different forms at different times and in different places. Rather than imposing a clean break with the past, the Ottomans tended to preserve pre-existing

arrangements. The model widely applied in newly-conquered areas relied on a survey of their land and resources. These assets, which theoretically remained the property of the sultan, were parcelled out to be enjoyed by various of his subjects. Peasants had the use of farmlands, and were taxed on their produce to support the provincial cavalry or charitable foundations. Land, or more properly the tax revenues deriving from it, could also be held as freehold: such outright grants were often made for derelict lodges in the early years and increasingly, as time went by, to high officials of state and favoured individuals who often converted these gifts into charitable foundations.⁹⁰

Sultan Mehmed confiscated much freehold land, and land which supported charitable foundations, so that it could be awarded as benefices to the provincial cavalry whose manpower was so vital for his frequent military campaigns.⁹¹ In the Balkans the dispossession in favour of provincial cavalrymen of marcher-lords who had won territory by force of arms, or of those such as dervishes who had been awarded the use of state lands, was highly unpopular. The reform had less radical effects in some areas of Anatolia where it simply meant that the status of the local, pre-existing Muslim aristocracy was altered to that of provincial cavalrymen who retained their traditional revenues from the land;⁹² it was reversed under Mehmed's successor, Bayezid II.

The rebuilding of Mehmed's new capital and supplying it with goods and services was a heavy burden on the finances at his disposal. His search for ready cash led him to debase the coinage on six occasions, but there is no record of further protests by the janissaries like those which greeted his first debasement during his brief occupation of the throne at the time of his father's abdication in 1444–6.⁹³

In its heyday the governing class of the Ottoman Empire was largely composed of men who had entered Ottoman service through the youth-levy imposed upon the sultan's Christian subjects. Initially confined to the Balkans, by the end of the fifteenth century the youth-levy had been extended to Anatolia. Certain areas – Istanbul and Bursa, for example – were not liable. Albanian, Bosnian, Greek, Bulgar, Serbian and Croatian boys were preferred; Jews and boys of Turkish, Kurdish, Persian, Ruthenian (roughly, Ukrainian), Muscovite or Georgian stock were exempted, while Armenians were taken only for service in the palace, not in the armed forces.⁹⁴ At first used to connote the clan of Osman and its followers, the term 'Osmanli' or 'Ottoman' came to signify a member of the ruling class, one of the 'sultan's servants', schooled to serve the state in war and peace. Peasants and provincials of whatever faith were subjects of this state and known as *re'aya*, from the Arabic word for 'flock'.

Although Sultan Bayezid I is credited with institutionalizing the youth-levy as a means of recruiting manpower for the army and the bureaucracy, new evidence suggests that the practice may have originated earlier, during the reign of his father Murad I, when it was applied not by the Sultan but by the marcher-lord Gazi Evrenos Bey in Macedonian territory conquered by his frontier forces in the 1380s.⁹⁵ Once adopted by the sultans, the success of this method of building up a professional, salaried army with strong ties of allegiance to them and the dynasty came, however, at the expense of those who had formerly been in the vanguard of conquest, the Muslim marcher-lords of Rumeli, like Gazi Evrenos himself, and their raiding troops. The term 'new force' that was used to denote the infantry of the standing army indicated the radical transformation that was under way. Over time the Ottoman governing class altered in character with the predominance of those who were Christian-born and non-Turkish in origin.

Nevertheless, Muslim marcher-lords continued to play a leading role in the conquests of the Ottoman state up to and including the reign of Sultan Mehmed II, especially in the Balkans. North-west of Thessalonica, at the heart of their domains in southern Macedonia and western Thrace, lay the seat of the Evrenosogullari in the town of Giannitsa. Although Gazi Evrenos' sons supported the 'False' Mustafa during the struggle to succeed Bayezid I, they were pardoned by the ultimate victor, Sultan Mehmed I, and Gazi Evrenos' grandsons played crucial command roles in many campaigns.⁹⁶ In Thessaly, where Turahan Bey founded the town of Larisa, the Turahanogullari were the architects of the Ottoman conquest. Turahan Bey, his son Ömer Bey and his grandson Hasan Bey left a rich legacy of charitable foundations in Thessaly, some sixty buildings including nineteen mosques, twelve dervish lodges, eight bath-houses and three public kitchens.⁹⁷ In Thrace lay the estates of another prominent dynasty of the early years of the Ottoman state, the Mihalogullari. The names of scions of this dynasty occur often in the records of the Ottoman conquests in the Balkans; like the sons of Gazi Evrenos, one of the sons of the founder Köse Mihal chose to support a loser in the succession struggle of the early fifteenth century, in his case Prince Musa.⁹⁸ Although members of these and the other warrior families to whom the Ottoman dynasty owed its success continued to hold provincial office in the Balkans and enjoy the privilege of dispensing heritable fiefdoms to their followers,⁹⁹ as the system based on the youth-levy expanded, they saw their former prestige diminish.

Another group whose influence also waned during Sultan Mehmed's reign was the Anatolian Turkish religious scholar-aristocracy of which the Candarli family were the leading representatives. For a century from the

reign of Sultan Orhan, the Çandarlı had acted as confidants of the sultans. Kara Halil Hayreddin Çandarlı served as grand vezir, and two of his sons also held this post. In 1443, the grand vezir was by Murad II was Kara Halil's grandson Halil Pasha Çandarlı. He was on by Mehmed II as grand vezir after Murad's death, but he failed to dissuade Mehmed from besieging Constantinople hastened his end and by Muslim and Christian writers alike to have been among the defenders of the city,¹⁰¹ and was executed soon after its capture. His death can now be seen as symbolic of the diminishing role which the Turkish families were to play in the future of the Ottoman state. Of seven grand vezirs, one was a Turkish-born Muslim, two were born converts raised by the youth-levy, two were Christian-born from the Byzantine or Byzanto-Serbian nobility, and the last was also Greek-born but of unknown origin.¹⁰²

A footnote to the career of Çandarlı Halil Pasha is the curious tale of the pretender 'Bayezid Osman'.¹⁰³ In June 1456 Francesco Sforza, Duke of Milan, received a report concerning a young boy supposedly brother to Mehmed and said to have been entrusted by Murad II to a Latin knight, Giovanni Torcello. The boy had come into the hands of agents of Calixtus III, and reached Venice in the spring of 1456. From Venice he was taken to the Apennine fortress of Spoleto. In a work appearing in 1462 Çandarlı Halil Pasha was credited with a role in sending the boy to him. The truth or otherwise of this assertion remains unknowable, but the subsequent adventures of 'Bayezid Osman' are not without interest. The European powers into whose hands he fell seem to have made little effort to press the putative claims to the Ottoman throne. 'Bayezid Osman' remained in Spoleto until 1459, when he was taken along by Pope Pius II on his progress through Italy which culminated in the Congress of Mantua, at which a crusade against the Ottomans was proclaimed. In 1464 the Pope again paraded his charge in public; he had the boy, now sixteen, bid farewell to the fleet setting off for Ancona against the Ottomans, a scene commemorated in a fresco in the Chapel of Pius II in the Duomo of Siena. The next year 'Bayezid Osman' was in Venice, and he later turned up at the court of King Matthias Corvinus of Buda. By 1473 he was at the Viennese court of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III who, it seems, loved to dress in the Ottoman style, and courted 'Bayezid Osman' around his domains in his retinue. In 1474 'Bayezid Osman' married an Austrian noblewoman, and subsequently disappeared from history. It was a tribute to the prestige of the Ottoman dynasty that, like the vanished Byzantine emperors, Catholic monarchs embraced the role of protectors and manipulators of pretenders to the sultanate.

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The empire Sultan Mehmed II set out to create was very different from the state his predecessors had won with such effort when the Ottoman dynasty was little more than first among its equals – the other Muslim Turkish dynasties of Anatolia. The practice of recruiting Christian converts into the Ottoman governing class came to be seen as more appropriate to his new and ambitious vision of the future direction of the imperial state. The power enjoyed by the grand vezir as the sultan's executive officer increased – although the sultan could wield the ultimate sanction of dismissal or execution. The status of the religious establishment was also enhanced under Mehmed II. The extensive area accorded in his mosque complex to theological colleges, and their situation on either side of the mosque – as though to encompass it – can be seen as symbolic of the prominence he intended the religious establishment to enjoy. By the same token, the physical distancing of the dervish lodge from the mosque – where formerly space had been provided within one building for dervish rituals alongside those of orthodox Islam – can be interpreted as a diminution of their place at the heart of religious practice.¹⁰³ Mehmed restricted the activities of those dervishes opposed to the increasingly centralized direction in which the state was moving; those prepared to support him enjoyed relatively greater acceptability.

From the time of Sultan Mehmed II the janissaries and other units of the standing army became the main tool for protecting and expanding the Ottoman domains. At their head was the sultan, although his active role as foremost of the 'warriors for the faith' was increasingly tempered by his desire to establish a centralized bureaucratic state. Inspired by Çandarlı Halil Pasha's manipulation of the janissaries in Edirne when his father Murad II was still alive, Mehmed strove to exert his authority over them, but was never able to bend them completely to his will. On his accession in 1451 he found it necessary to give in to their demands for a bonus to mark the event, a practice apparently begun by Bayezid I but from now on expected.¹⁰⁴ Problems arose again when the janissaries mutinied in 1455 during the winter campaign to take the port of Enez, at the mouth of the Maritsa, from the Genoese, and again at the time of the unsuccessful siege of Belgrade in the following year.¹⁰⁵ Mehmed's successors were no more fortunate and the dire consequences of failing to keep the janissaries in check were apparent on many occasions in the course of the Ottoman centuries.

During his last years, Sultan Mehmed undertook a programme of legislative consolidation and centralization. The architect was Karamani Mehniye Pasha, grand vezir from, probably, 1476 until Mehmed's death – the exact dates of appointment and dismissal of Mehmed's grand vezirs are disputed – who enjoyed a distinguished career in the administration of the empire.

Like the Çandarlı, he came from an aristocratic Turkish background, a descendant of the mystic Mevlana Jalal al-Din Rumi, founder of the Mevlevi order of dervishes.¹⁰⁶ Two law-codes are known from Mehmed's reign; the first contains penal clauses as well as regulations to do with the taxation of the subject population; the second is concerned with the forms of government and the relationship between its parts. Allusions in the codes to 'the ancient law' or 'the ancient custom' make it clear that they largely dealt with the formalizing of regulations which were already current. It is a matter of scholarly debate, however, which parts of the extant versions of these law-codes do in fact date from Mehmed's time and which clauses were inserted in later reigns by way of updating. Mehmed was the first sultan to promulgate laws applicable to areas of state life – such as public administration – which were not catered for in religious law; although neither of his codes refers to the religious law, and although their legality depended directly on the will of the sultan, their provisions do not contradict those of religious law.¹⁰⁷ Reviewing Sultan Mehmed's policies, the polemical, pro-dervish chronicler Aşıkpaşazade, who wrote between 1476 and 1502, held Karamani Mehmed responsible for the downturn in the fortunes of the dervishes and marcher-lords through his programme of returning state revenues to government control.¹⁰⁸

Another development during the reign of Mehmed II was that a new pattern of alliances emerged, whereby the holders of the highest offices of government were tied to the Ottoman dynasty through marriage – this pattern continued to the end of the empire. As the states into whose ruling families the Ottoman dynasty had formerly intermarried with a view to commanding allegiance in a world of shifting loyalties became absorbed into the Ottoman domains – Byzantium, Serbia and Karaman, for instance – so there came about a dearth of suitable marriage partners for the sultans and members of their families. Following the execution of Mehmed's first grand vezir, Çandarlı Halil Pasha, the office seems to have been held by Zaganos Mehmed Pasha, Mehmed's mentor and confidant since childhood, who had been certain that Constantinople would fall to his master. He was a Christian convert whose daughter was married to Mehmed.¹⁰⁹ Zaganos Mehmed Pasha was succeeded as grand vezir by the former Serbian prisoner-of-war Mahmud Pasha Angelović, who was married to another of the Sultan's daughters. Appointed in recognition of his prowess at the failed siege of Belgrade in 1456, he held the office until 1468, when he fell victim to the intrigues of a rival, Rum Mehmed Pasha, who may have been captured at the conquest of Constantinople. A talented military commander, Mahmud Pasha accompanied Sultan Mehmed on many of his most successful campaigns.¹¹⁰ Writing around the turn of the century the chronicler Mehmed

Nesri said of him that it was as if the Sultan had abdicated in favour of his grand vezir.¹¹¹ The pretext for Mahmud Pasha's dismissal from the grand vezirate appears to have been that he was selective in carrying out the deportation of the Karamanid population to Istanbul after the campaign of 1468, allowing the rich to remain behind. He also seems to have been overly well-disposed to the insubordinate Karamanid prince Pir Ahmed.¹¹² Rum Mehmed is chiefly remembered through the hostile eyes of Aşikpaşazade, whose family was adversely affected by the introduction of taxes on properties in Istanbul which Sultan Mehmed, in the first flush of conquest and with the aim of revitalizing the city, had ordered should be exempt. In questioning Rum Mehmed Pasha's motives, Aşikpaşazade resorted to the slur that he was acting as a Byzantine agent. Some of these taxes were cancelled once Mehmed's son Bayezid came to the throne in yet another change of policy.¹¹³

Mahmud Pasha was reinstated as grand vezir in 1472, but he never again enjoyed the Sultan's complete trust. After playing a controversial role in the 1473 campaigns against Uzun Hasan and his forces, he was dismissed in favour of an ambitious rival, another talented commander on land and sea, Gedik Ahmed Pasha, also of the Byzantine or Byzanto-Serbian nobility.¹¹⁴ He was appointed to the grand vezirate in Mahmud Pasha's stead but near-contemporary observers blamed Mahmud Pasha's final demise on his bad relations with Sultan Mehmed's son Prince Mustafa. The chroniclers of the time do not note any reason for the enmity between the Prince and the Grand Vezir, nor for Mehmed's decision in 1474 to execute a man who had been the agent of his designs of conquest over many years. Prince Mustafa, it will be recalled, fell ill and died in 1474; a century later it was suggested that Mahmud Pasha had poisoned the Prince in revenge for the latter's violation of his *harem*. A contemporary document which came to light 500 years after the event gives details of a legal dispute over his will between Mahmud Pasha's daughters of his first marriage and his second wife. The second wife had apparently been divorced by Mahmud Pasha on his return from the campaign against Uzun Hasan in 1474, because he heard that she had impugned his honour by spending a night in the house of Prince Mustafa's mother when the Prince was in residence: since her husband was away and she went to the Prince's mother's house at night, a scandalous interpretation of her behaviour was unavoidable.¹¹⁵ Mahmud Pasha was the injured party, but paid with his life for his failure to keep his wife under control. The life of the highest-ranking statesman in the empire was an uncertain one, even when he was a favourite of the sultan.

Sultan Mehmed's predecessors had laid the foundation for a state ruled over by an absolute sovereign and administered and protected by a slave caste

of 'sultan's servants' who served him undividedly; Mehmed's grand aspirations and ambitious vision further developed this idea. He saw himself as the legitimate heir to Byzantium and as having realized Islamic traditions that the peerless city of Constantinople would one day be Muslim; and also as the epigone of the heroes of the Classical world. He knew some Greek, and his interest in the ancients must have been widely known in contemporary political circles. It was alluded to in his own time by the Venetian Niccolo Sagundino, a native of Euboea, in his account of the Ottomans. Mehmed wrote Sagundino, was fascinated by the Spartans, the Athenians, the Romans and the Carthaginians but identified above all with Alexander of Macedonia and Julius Caesar.¹¹⁶ The Byzantine Critoboulos of Imbros (Gökçeada) wrote in the preface to his eulogistic biography that Mehmed's exploits equalled Alexander's:

Seeing that you are the author of many great deeds . . . and in the belief that the many great achievements of generals and kings of old, nor merely Persians and Greeks, are not worthy to be compared in glory and bravery and martial valour with yours, I do not think it just that they and their deeds and accomplishments . . . should be celebrated and admired by all . . . while you should have no witness for the future . . . or that the deeds of others . . . should be better known and more famed . . . while your accomplishments . . . [which are] in no way inferior to those of Alexander the Macedonian . . . should not be set forth . . . nor passed on to posterity.¹¹⁷

Mehmed fostered this identification of himself with great warriors of the past. On his way to win Lesbos from the Venetians in 1462 he visited Troy, where he viewed the ruins, noted the advantageous location of the site, enquired about the tombs of the heroes of the siege, Achilles and Ajax and others, and remarked that they had been fortunate indeed to have been extolled by a poet such as Homer.¹¹⁸ Soon after, he had the *Iliad* and the standard life of Alexander, Arrian's *Anabasis of Alexander the Great*, copied for his library.¹¹⁹ The historical tradition Sultan Mehmed tried to keep alive and of which he felt himself to be part reached far back into the past, but his eyes were set on a brilliant future for his empire.

SULTAN MEHMED II established firm rule over the Ottoman domains, yet he was unable to exert a similar authority over his own household. After his death, rivalry between his two surviving sons Bayezid and Cem (known as Cem Sultan) greatly disturbed the tranquillity of the state. Bayezid was successful in claiming the throne but the challenge to his right to rule posed by his charismatic younger brother continued until Cem's death in 1495.

A second challenge was less easily dealt with, and continued to plague both Bayezid and his son and successor Selim I: although to western states the victorious Ottomans seemed a perpetual threat, the Ottomans themselves were preoccupied with danger from the east in the shape of the Safavid state of Iran and the allure it held for the Turcoman people of eastern Anatolia – whom Mehmed II had tried by force to bring into his empire.

At the time of Sultan Mehmed's death, Cem was prince-governor of the Ottoman province of Karaman from his seat at Konya and Bayezid was at Amasya, administrative centre of the frontier province of Rum which he had governed – if only in name during his childhood – since 1454. He had served as commander of the east Anatolian frontier during his father's reign and distinguished himself in campaigns against Uzun Hasan and the Akkoyunlu. His court at Amasya was a refuge for those who opposed his father, particularly during Mehmed's final years when Grand Vezir Karamani Mehmed Pasha was working to increase the authority of central government over the provinces. Whereas Mehmed had educated himself in the Classical and Byzantine legacy to which he imagined himself heir, Bayezid sought the company of teachers of Islamic science and philosophy, poets and mystics, men whose intellectual roots lay in the east.¹

Islamic practice requires that corpses be buried as soon as possible but Mehmed II's body was neglected after it was secretly brought into Istanbul the night after he died, and it was three days before perfumed candles were lit beside it to temper the smell.² Karamani Mehmed Pasha had attempted to realize what he supposed to be the late Sultan's wish, the succession of

Prince Cem rather than Prince Bayezid, by sending both brothers notification of Mehmed's death: Konya being closer to the capital than Amasya, he hoped that Cem would arrive to claim the throne before Bayezid. But the janissaries supported Bayezid, and Karamani Mehmed's strategy enraged them. Despite the secrecy, news of Mehmed's death had spread, and when Karamani Mehmed tried to prevent the janissaries from returning to Istanbul – which they had been forbidden to do – they killed him. His murder clearly demonstrated that the janissary corps, created by the Ottoman sultans to be their loyal guard and the elite force of their army, was an unreliable monster which put its own interests before those of its masters.

The arrival of the corpse in the capital and Karamani Mehmed Pasha's murder provoked uncertainty and days of rioting. A former grand vezir, Ishak Pasha, who had remained in Istanbul in the absence of the Sultan and Grand Vezir on campaign, understood the importance of the unfolding drama. He wrote begging Bayezid to hurry and seized the initiative by proclaiming Bayezid's eleven-year-old son Prince Korkud regent until his father should reach the capital. Such had been Mehmed's fear of a rival within his own family during the last years of his reign that Korkud had been held in Istanbul in case he became a focus of loyalty for those opposed to his grandfather. The proclamation of Korkud's regency quelled the looting and disorder and the pro-Bayezid faction rallied to halt Cem's advance. Bayezid's partisans included two of his sons-in-law who held positions of influence in ruling circles: the governor of Rumeli, Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha, and Sinan Pasha, governor of Anadolu province, who was instructed to block the routes between Konya and the capital. It seems that Sinan Pasha intercepted the messengers sent by the unfortunate Karamani Mehmed to Cem in Konya.

Although Bayezid could be assured of an enthusiastic welcome once he reached Istanbul, Cem had strong support in Anatolia. Cem's army moved from Konya towards the old Ottoman capital of Bursa, meeting with resistance from Bayezid's partisans along the way. Bayezid made the journey from Amasya to claim the throne with some apprehension, but arrived in Istanbul and was proclaimed sultan on 22 May 1481. Mehmed's embalmed body had lain in Topkapı Palace; following Bayezid's arrival it was borne to his mosque for burial.³ An anonymous and possibly contemporary French report describing the funeral procession provides the curious detail that an effigy of the Sultan was carried atop the coffin. A modern comparison between the ceremonial at Mehmed's funeral and that of the founder of Constantinople, Emperor Constantine the Great, in 337 CE, invites the conclusion that even in death Mehmed nurtured the image of himself as legitimate heir to the capital and empire of the Byzantines.⁴ Whereas earlier

sultans and high-ranking members of the Ottoman dynasty had been buried at Bursa, Istanbul, capital of Mehmed's empire, now became the site of sultanic burial, wherever death might have occurred.⁵

Defying his brother's army, Cem established himself at Bursa, where he pursued his claim to the throne by minting coins and having the sermon at the Friday prayer read in his own name. Aware of his weak position, however, he sent his aunt as emissary to suggest to Bayezid that they partition the empire between them.⁶ Sultan Bayezid refused, but took seriously the possibility that Cem's popularity might endanger his rule in Anatolia, and recalled the experienced commander Gedik Ahmed Pasha from Otranto. Gedik Ahmed was at Bayezid's side when the brothers met in battle at Yenisehir, east of Bursa; Cem was forced to retreat to Konya, where he arrived on 25 June pursued by Bayezid. Although Cem's army included troops from Karaman and tribesmen who resented Karaman's recent incorporation into the Ottoman state⁷ it was not safe for him to remain in Anatolia and, taking his family and advisers with him, he went south across the Taurus mountains to Adana, seat of the Ramazanoğulları, clients of the Mamluks.⁸

Bayezid appealed to his father-in-law Alaüddevle, ruler of neighbouring Dulkadir, to apprehend Cem. That this appeal was ignored demonstrated that Cem was perceived as a real challenger for the throne whom Dulkadir – which like the Ramazanoğlu emirate was a buffer state between the Ottomans and the Mamluks, aligning itself first with one and then with the other of these great powers – could not afford to alienate. From Adana Cem continued to Antakya and then Aleppo, where he entered Mamluk territory, reaching Cairo in late September.⁹

Cem and his entourage, which included his mother Çiçek Hatun, his wife and his immediate household,¹⁰ were greeted with great warmth and ceremony in the Cairo of Sultan Qa'it Bay. Cem made the pilgrimage to Mecca, and on his return to Cairo was approached by a Karamanid prince, Kasim, brother of Uzun Hasan's protégé Pir Ahmed. Like many dispossessed princes before him Kasim saw opportunity in a disputed succession and in the hope of regaining his own ancestral territories proposed to Cem an offensive alliance against Bayezid. Cem accordingly returned to Anatolia early in 1482, to meet Kasim and his army in Adana. They besieged Konya, where Bayezid's eldest son, Abdullah, had been appointed prince-governor in Cem's place, but were beaten off by Abdullah and Gedik Ahmed Pasha. Cem and Kasim marched towards Ankara, but news of Bayezid's own approach from Istanbul compelled them to retreat into Cilicia. Here Cem received an envoy from Bayezid offering him a sum of gold and the opportunity to retire to Jerusalem – but Cem had no intention of withdrawing.¹¹

It is not clear why Bayezid thought Cem might agree to settle in Jerusalem, a city deep inside Mamluk territory. Not only were relations between the Mamluk and Ottoman states less than cordial, but Jerusalem was still claimed by western monarchs harbouring dreams of continuing the crusade in Greater Syria. King Ferrante of Naples styled himself 'King of Jerusalem' in letters to Sultan Bayezid negotiating the Ottoman withdrawal from Otranto in 1481-2,¹² and Charles VIII, who became king of France in 1483, was even more ambitious: he not only used the title 'King of Jerusalem' but also, like Mehmed, imagined himself the successor to the Byzantine emperors.¹³

As it had after Tamerlane's defeat of the Sultan's namesake Bayezid I in 1402, the Ottoman Empire again seemed in danger of being partitioned. Kasim Bey of Karaman, less optimistic than Cem about the prospect of successfully pursuing Bayezid across Anatolia, proposed that Cem should instead sail to Rumeli and foment rebellion there (perhaps he had in mind the example of Musa, son of Bayezid I, some seventy years before). But Cem could count on no natural constituency in Rumeli, and had no intention of continuing his struggle from there. His support lay in Anatolia: outside this region he would have ranged against him all the resources of the regular army inherited by Bayezid as the legitimate sultan.¹⁴ Obtaining a safe-conduct from the Knights Hospitallers of St John on Rhodes, Cem set sail with a suite of some thirty companions and servants from the Mediterranean port of Korikos (Corycos) on the south coast of Anatolia and reached Rhodes on 29 July 1482. Kasim had appealed to the Knights for weapons to further his Rumelian adventure but they, reluctant to antagonize Bayezid openly, refused to supply him.¹⁵ Cem spent a month in Rhodes during which time he authorized the Grand Master of the Order, Pierre d'Aubusson, to negotiate with Bayezid on his behalf.¹⁶ He then sailed for France where the Knights could keep him safe from his brother.

At around this time Cem sent Bayezid a couplet in which he expressed his sense of injustice and sadness at his situation:

A-smile on bed of roses dost thou lie in all delight,
In dolour's stove-room mid the ashes couch I – why is this?

To which Bayezid replied:

To me was empire on the Fore-eternal day decreed,
Yet thou to Destiny wilt yield thee not – why, why is this?
'A pilgrim to the Holy Shrines am I' thou dost declare,
And yet thou dost for earthly Sultan-ship sigh – why is this?¹⁷

The very day after Cem quit Rhodes for France, ambassadors left the island for the Ottoman court. The Knights were considering how to rally support for a crusade against the vulnerable Sultan, but finding no allies,

hastened to renew their peace treaty with the Ottomans. This treaty, ratified by the end of the year, was broadly similar to that agreed on Mehmed II's accession. Possession of Cem gave the Knights enormous leverage over Bayezid and confidence that the siege of 1480 would not be repeated, at least for the present. Furthermore, they could afford to betray Cem's trust: rather than acting to protect Cem from Bayezid, d'Aubusson charged his envoys in a secret memorandum to intimate to Bayezid that he was willing to discuss Cem's position. Bayezid was alive to the harm Cem might do as the figurehead of a Christian offensive against his empire and, as the secret memorandum had promised, the envoy he sent to take the treaty to Rhodes for ratification by the Grand Master struck a further bargain: reminiscent of the deal between Mehmed II and the Byzantine Emperor Constantine XI over the pretender Orhan, it stipulated that the Knights would keep Cem under guard in France in return for an annual payment by Bayezid of 40,000 gold ducats.¹⁸

Cem reached Nice on 17 October 1482, and allegedly expressed his amazement at his exotic surroundings in the following couplet:

How wondrous nice a town this town of Nice,
Where none is questioned, whate'er his caprice!¹⁹

Two executions followed Cem's departure west. Gedik Ahmed Pasha, former grand vezir and grand admiral, had incurred Bayezid's displeasure for his failure to apprehend Cem when he fled to Egypt; now that the immediate threat posed by Cem had receded, Bayezid had Gedik Ahmed murdered in Edirne. In Istanbul İskender Pasha, warden of the city, was ordered to strangle Cem's young son Oğuz (like Korkud, he had been kept in Istanbul as a hostage since Mehmed II's time), but found himself unable to carry out the grisly murder with his own hands. He administered poison instead.²⁰

Bayezid feared Cem was either plotting on his own or, worse, being used by his enemies for their own ends. But Cem's enforced move to France took him further from the throne. Any offensive mounted by Kasim from Rumeli would, he knew, be foiled by the Ottoman fleet, which was under Bayezid's control. Cem also understood that he could expect no help from the West. The Italian states were reluctant to adventure against a proven foe – Naples had regained Otranto, but the shock of the Ottoman seizure of the fortress in 1480 persuaded the King to strike a peace²¹ – and though while he was in Rhodes Cem might have envisaged the possibility that King Louis XI would back him, France proved uninterested in promoting a crusade against Bayezid.²²

From Nice, Cem was moved inland, from castle to castle in south-east

France, his captors motivated by the substantial annual sum they received from the Sultan to guarantee his confinement. Bayezid sent various agents to ascertain his brother's whereabouts and report on what he was doing.²³ One such was a seaman named Barak, who in 1486 travelled from Istanbul across Italy bound for France, a hazardous journey during which he was robbed. He reached Genoa from where he was taken to Turin to see Charles, Duke of Savoy, who, having met Cem earlier and tried to help him escape, was at first suspicious of Barak but agreed to give him a guide if Barak could pay his expenses. Barak failed to raise enough money and took ship from Genoa, intending to return to Istanbul. Alighting on the coast at Rapallo, south of Genoa, however, he overheard a significant conversation – possibly in a tavern: Cem was to be transferred by the Knights to Italy. This prompted Barak to return to Genoa where he managed to raise the money he needed to continue his quest and, with the guide provided by the Duke, set off westwards from Turin; they crossed the Alps by the Mont Cenis pass, following reported sightings of 'Turks' by local informants, until they reached the remote fortress of Bourganeuf in central France, some forty kilometres west of the town of Aubusson, birthplace of Pierre d'Aubusson, Grand Master of the Knights of St John. As Barak reported to his interrogators after his return to Istanbul:

We asked the tavern-keeper 'Is it time for mass?' ... 'Yes', he replied. He [i.e. his guide] took me to the church. On entering the church we saw a lot of Knights, each reading from a book in his hand. I stood in a secluded corner. The man conducting me came up and pulled me by the shoulder, and we went out of the church. We saw a number of men in turbans outside the castle by the moat. I saw six persons in turbans. He himself [i.e. Cem] was wearing a garment of black velvet and was chatting with a man with a full beard – he looked like a civilian. He himself had his beard cut short and had let his moustaches grow long, but his face was pale: I asked [my guide] about this and it appears that at that time he had just recovered from illness.²⁴

This was as close as he came to Cem. There was no further help from Charles of Savoy, who had a rebellion on his hands, and Bayezid's agent Barak seems to have returned to Istanbul.²⁵

Spurred on by Cem's mother Çiçek Hatun, who had remained in Egypt after her son left, the Mamluk sultan Qa'it Bay had on various occasions during the early months of Bayezid's reign corresponded with the Knights of Rhodes about the possibility of having Cem sent back to Cairo, but this was always refused.²⁶ He intensified his efforts after 1485 when Mamluks and Ottomans were at war, and in 1487–8 approached King Charles VIII of France through an agent of Lorenzo de' Medici and offered 100,000 gold ducats for the return of Cem to Cairo.²⁷ But by this time the nego-

tions of which Barak had overheard mention were under way: the Pope, Innocent VIII, was seeking to persuade King Charles that the interests of Christendom would be best served if Cem were handed over to him. In March 1489 Cem reached Rome and the Vatican; he was 29 years old.

With Cem in his hands, the Pope began to rally support for an ambitious crusade against Bayezid, and in autumn 1489 sent an envoy to Qa'it Bay to initiate negotiations for Mamluk help.²⁸ Qa'it Bay, still hoping to have Cem returned to his custody, promised Innocent that the former Crusader kingdom of Jerusalem could be re-established if he sent Cem to Egypt.²⁹ But in 1490 Matthias Corvinus – who had tried for years to gain custody of Cem, whether on his account or on behalf of Qa'it Bay³⁰ – died, and a new diplomatic era began. Ambassadors were exchanged between Bayezid and the Pope and an agreement eventually reached which was essentially the same as that between the Knights of Rhodes and Bayezid. The Pope undertook to be Cem's custodian and not to use him against Bayezid, in exchange for which he would receive an annual sum of 40,000 gold ducats – and Christian relics such as the head of the lance that had pierced Christ's side at the crucifixion, preserved in Istanbul since the fall of Constantinople. The bargain was concluded with much bad faith on both sides.³¹

As Cem's years in captivity went by, boredom set in. In the impregnable tower constructed to house him at Bourganeuf – which survives today – his life in exile with only a few servitors for company began to pall, and his zest for pursuing his quarrel with his brother waned.³² Once he had arrived in Rome, considerable sums were spent on his comfort but Cem wanted nothing so much as to return to his homeland, or failing that, he wrote, to live out his days in Iran, the Arab lands or India.³³ Even with the possibility of a crusade looming, he told the Pope that he could not abandon his faith 'even for the rule of the whole world'.³⁴ In letters taken to Bayezid from Rome, Cem expressed his great desire to leave his prison, and must have been sincere when he said that he was ready to forget their differences and swear allegiance to his brother.³⁵

As a captive in Rome, Cem might have been aware of a drama being played out even further from his homeland that would have repercussions there. On 2 January 1492 the city of Granada in Andalusia in southern Spain, seat of the Islamic Nasrid dynasty, fell to the armies of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile; a month later a magnificent pageant was enacted in Rome to celebrate the Spanish victory. The fall of Constantinople was still fresh in the minds of Christendom, and the triumph over the 'Moors' was welcomed as some revenge for the many tribulations suffered

at the hands of the Ottomans.³⁷ Sultan Mehmed II had received a delegation of Andalusian Muslims seeking his protection in 1477,³⁸ before the Spanish Inquisition officially began, and Bayezid offered them asylum after the fall of Granada. Although not forced to make the choice between conversion or emigration until 1501, many accepted this offer and within a few years three large churches in Thessalonica were converted into mosques to serve those who took refuge with the Ottomans.³⁹ After various vicissitudes, the remnants of the Andalusian Muslim community were expelled from the Iberian peninsula between 1609 and 1614.⁴⁰

The Jews of Spain, called Sephardim, were less fortunate. They had been under pressure long before the Inquisition and many had converted to Catholicism. However, the Inquisition tested the sincerity of converts and many were found wanting and put to death. Practising Jews were expelled from Spain in 1492 and emigrated to Portugal, France, and other countries of Europe. Many went to live in the Ottoman Empire, where they found Greek-speaking Jews, called Romaniotes, and German Jews, called Ashkenazim, who had also been expelled from their homelands. Sultan Bayezid welcomed the Spanish Jews, reportedly with the observation: 'Can you call such a king [i.e. Ferdinand] wise and intelligent? He is impoverishing his country and enriching my kingdom'.⁴¹ The greatest wave of Jewish immigration into the Ottoman lands took place between 1492 and 1512 in the wake of the persecutions which spread across Europe during this period. Bayezid wished these refugees to concentrate in provincial centres, and there were soon Sephardi communities in many towns of the empire. They were not welcomed in Istanbul, however, and new synagogues in the capital were closed down and prominent Jews encouraged to convert to Islam.⁴²

The equilibrium established in 1490 by the agreement reached between Innocent VIII and Bayezid concerning Cem did not last. The Ottoman pretender was used as a pawn in European politics as Charles VIII attempted to make good his claim to the Kingdom of Naples.⁴³ In 1492 Innocent was succeeded by Alexander VI, and the new pope had a pressing reason for standing by the agreement with Bayezid, to whom he wrote of the French king's plans:

... the king of France is pushing on toward Rome with the greatest land and sea forces, supported by the Milanese, Bretons, Portuguese, Normans and others in order to wrest from us Jem Sultan, the brother of his Highness, and to seize the kingdom of Naples and oust King Alfonso.⁴⁴

Bayezid's reply to the Pope, together with money sent to Rome for Cem's pension, was intercepted and made public, a damning condemnation of the

pope as an ally of the enemy of Christendom. Charles, who was at Florence, moved south through Italy and reached a terrified Rome on the last day of 1494. He demanded that Cem be handed over to him. Pope Alexander agreed under duress, on the understanding that it should be for six months only, and against payment of a surety. Cem was duly transferred into Charles's custody and continued towards Naples with the King's army.⁴⁴

King Alfonso of Naples, successor to King Ferrante, turned to Bayezid for help. According to a contemporary Venetian writer, the Sultan truly feared that Charles might take Cem into the Balkans and raise the people of the region against him: the Ottoman ambassador to Venice recorded that the French King counted on support from disinherited scions of the noble houses of Byzantium and Serbia and Scanderbeg's Kastriota clan. The Sultan reinforced the Dardanelles defences and prepared his fleet. Panic spread in Istanbul where he inspected the walls and set up gun positions to defend the city.⁴⁵

Two days after Charles and his army reached Naples, Cem died there in the night of 24–25 February 1495 at the age of 36, after thirteen years in exile. There were rumours that poison had brought about his end, but it seems that he died of natural causes. Even in death he found no rest. Bayezid sent a messenger to request that the body be sent to him in exchange for further Christian relics in his possession: without the body, he said, he had no proof of Cem's demise. Charles moved the corpse to the strong fortress of Gaeta on the coast north of Naples, and when in November 1496 the French withdrew from Gaeta the coffin was handed over to Prince Frederick of Naples in exchange for French prisoners in Neapolitan hands. Naples needed the Sultan's support against its enemies, and Bayezid threatened to nullify the peace between them if Naples did not send the body to Istanbul. Further threats brought results, and by early 1499 Cem's body was on its way to Istanbul, crossing the Adriatic from San Cataldo in the heel of Italy to Vlorë on the Albanian coast. From there it was borne home, probably by sea, met with great pomp after passing Gelibolu, and taken to Bursa. Here Cem was finally interred alongside his eldest brother Mustafa, in the funeral complex of his grandfather, Sultan Murad II. His tomb can still be visited.⁴⁶ The extraordinary story of Cem's life captured the imagination of writers in both east and west and has continued to provide inspiration to the present.⁴⁷ He is depicted as a tragic figure on an epic scale, a true Renaissance prince – educated and articulate and the author of well-regarded poetry – who realized the folly of his political ambitions too late to save himself from elegant captivity and a mysterious death.

With Cem buried, Sultan Bayezid was free at last, but this episode in Ottoman history was remarkable for heralding a change in the style of Ottoman diplomacy vis-à-vis the Christian powers. Unlike the diplomatic agreements of the past, whereby one state would mediate relations with the Ottomans on behalf of others whose interests were affected, negotiations over Cem's custody had been conducted individually with each state. Bayezid had been able to exploit the rivalry between them and, from the mid 1480s, direct bilateral relations with the European states began to outweigh the collective agreements of the past. The first Ottoman envoys were sent to European courts at this time – to France in 1483, to Muscovy in 1495 and to the Holy Roman Emperor in 1496–7.⁴⁸ Although both Christian and Muslim states depicted their relations as being perpetually hostile, Cem's odyssey demonstrated the extent to which political expediency rather than religious ideology dictated their attitude. It was apparent to all that Charles VIII's France was a far more immediate threat than the Ottoman Empire to peace in Italy, and the Ottomans exploited this situation with acumen.

The years during which Bayezid was occupied with the fate of Cem also demonstrated that despite Mehmed II's remarkable achievements, the integrity of the Ottoman Empire could not be taken for granted. Cem's departure for Rhodes in July 1482 had given Sultan Bayezid some respite from domestic turmoil. Prince Kasim of Karaman, who had made common cause with Cem, sought a pardon from the Sultan and in return for renouncing his claims to independence was appointed governor of the southern Anatolian province of Iç-il (roughly, Cilicia), formerly part of the emirate of Karaman.⁴⁹ An elderly man, he died in 1483. Karaman could now be administered as an integral part of the Ottoman domains but the situation remained tense. As late as 1500, Bayezid was forced to despatch troops to defeat another claimant to Karaman, Kasim's nephew Mustafa, who appeared from Iran with an army in support of an uprising there.⁵⁰

In the competition for the allegiance of the Turcoman tribal population living in the buffer region between Mamluks and Ottomans, Sultan Qait Bay had resisted the temptation to exploit Cem, but Cem's period of refuge with the Mamluk sultan in 1481 had been an augury of conflict to come. Besides the Karamanid tribes, now at least nominally Ottoman, though disaffected, there were the still-independent emirates of the Dulkadiroğlu and Ramazanoğlu dynasties, who controlled territories with shifting boundaries from their centres at Elbistan and Adana respectively and relied on Mamluk or Ottoman support for their continued existence.

The first Ottoman–Mamluk war began in 1485 when, with the blessing of his son-in-law Bayezid, Alaüddin of Dulkadir besieged the Mamluk

city of Malatya, west of the Euphrates in south-east Anatolia. Bayezid sent reinforcements to support Alaüddevle when the Mamluks retaliated; the Mamluks were defeated but went on to win a second encounter shortly afterwards.⁵¹ The Mamluk ruler went out of his way to taunt Bayezid by confiscating gifts sent to him by the Shah of the Deccan (in peninsular India) as they passed through Mamluk territory.⁵² In the summer of 1485 Bayezid despatched an army under the new governor of Karaman, Karagöz ('Black-eye') Mehmed Pasha, against the Turgudlu and Varsak Turcomans, tribes who had been fiercest in their resistance to Ottoman annexation of Karaman and had supplied men for Cem's army in its attempt to reach Istanbul in 1481. Karagöz Mehmed captured the fortresses of the Tarsus-Adana area, whose strategic location controlling the route from Anatolia to Syria earned them the epithet 'key to the Arab lands'.⁵³

Sultan Qa'it Bay acted decisively to contain the Ottoman threat to his domains. In March 1486 Mamluk troops clashed on a battlefield near Adana with a combined force of Karagöz Mehmed's units from Karaman and an army sent from Istanbul under the command of Bayezid's son-in-law Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha, now governor of Anadolu. Karagöz Mehmed and his men fled (he was later arrested and executed) and Hersekzade Ahmed was captured and sent to Cairo. The Mamluks took control of Adana, Tarsus and the Cilician plain.⁵⁴ The following year the grand vezir, Daud Pasha, led into the field an imperial army joined this time by Alaüddevle's forces from Dulkadir. Against Alaüddevle's advice, the original plan to march against the Mamluks was abandoned and the army redirected to suppress an uprising of the Varsak and Turgudlu tribes. Having succeeded in this, Daud Pasha returned home knowing that he had reduced the risk of an attack in the rear whenever the Ottomans resumed their campaigns against the Mamluks.⁵⁵

In 1488 the Ottomans launched a two-pronged attack on the Mamluks by land and sea. Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha, lately freed from captivity in Cairo, commanded a fleet in support of the land operations, while the army was commanded by the governor of Rumeli, Hadim ('Eunuch') Ali Pasha. As it moved into disputed territory, the army captured a number of fortresses from the Mamluks and their clients. Both antagonists attempted to attract assistance from the West – because of its treaty relations with the Mamluks Venice refused Bayezid the use of Cyprus as a base, while Qa'it Bay approached the other Italian states with equal lack of success.⁵⁶ There was relief in Rhodes when the Ottoman fleet sailed by without making any demands, for while the Knights of St John maintained diplomatic and commercial relations with the Mamluks, it was the Ottomans they feared.⁵⁷ Venice sent a fleet to Cyprus which prevented Hersekzade Ahmed's armada

landing; instead it docked at Iskenderun on the Anatolian coast to confront the Mamluk forces as they came north through the pass from Syria. But a great storm wrecked the Ottoman fleet and the Mamluks were able to continue towards Adana unimpeded. Hadim Ali's army suffered a great defeat in the ensuing battle and fled, pursued by Turcoman tribal forces. It was small consolation that a Mamluk unit returning to Aleppo was routed by Hersekzade Ahmed. Hadim Ali withdrew into Karaman and tried to regroup his scattered forces. Many of the Ottoman provincial commanders who had fled the battlefield were taken back to Istanbul and imprisoned in the Bosphorus fortress of Rumeli Hisarı. Adana castle resisted siege for three months before its Ottoman garrison handed it over to the Mamluks. Defeat cost the Ottomans the support of the few Turcoman tribes over whom they had been able to exert influence, and also led Alaüddevle of Dulkadir to be more open about his preference for the Mamluks as the stronger power in the region. The Ottomans responded by favouring his brother Şahbudak as ruler of Dulkadir, but they were unable to enforce his candidacy and he was sent by Alaüddevle as a captive to Egypt where he, too, took the Mamluk side.⁵⁸

Yet the Mamluks were unable to exploit their advantage. In 1490 their army pushed into Karaman to besiege Kayseri in central Anatolia, only to withdraw when it was learned that Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha was marching against them. The Mamluks could no longer bear the cost of a conflict that had become bogged down in stalemate, and they faced internal opposition to the war. The Ottomans were aware that their own forces might have to confront a crusade from the West, and a peace was agreed the following year: the frontier between the two states was fixed at the Gülek pass commanding the route over the eastern Taurus Mountains, and the Mamluks retained their influence in the Adana region.⁵⁹

The inconclusive Ottoman–Mamluk war having already ended when Cem died in 1495, Bayezid was then free to turn his attention westwards. The Venetian envoy in Istanbul saw the extensive preparations being undertaken at the arsenal in the Golden Horn in 1499, but could not believe that either his republic or its overseas territories could be the target: Venice had been careful to keep its distance from any plans for a crusade being discussed during the years of Cem's captivity, and had been at peace with the Ottomans since 1479. He thought instead, as did the Knights, that the armada would sail against Rhodes.⁶⁰

It seemed that Bayezid had always been determined to complete his father's project of driving the Venetians from their remaining outposts. Nafpaktos surrendered to a land and sea attack on 28 August 1499 and the Ottomans fortified the narrow entrance to the Gulf of Corinth to the west

with a pair of opposed fortresses, just as they had fortified their other strategic waterways, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. Venice itself was harassed in October by raids which came to within 30 kilometres of the city. Early in 1500 a Venetian emissary sought the return of Nafpaktos in an audience at the Ottoman court, only to be informed that the Sultan intended to take over Venice's outposts on the eastern Adriatic coast as well, and make the Adriatic the frontier between his domains and Venice; later that year, Methoni, Koroni and Pylos (Navarino) on the coast of the south-western Peloponnese fell to Ottoman naval attack.⁶¹

Putting aside their disputes, and after much diplomatic wrangling, Venice, the Papacy and Hungary entered into a league against the Ottomans in May 1501. Venice still retained the islands of Cyprus, Crete and Corfu, but the number of its minor possessions was dwindling. It stepped up its attacks on Ottoman territory: later in the same year a joint French-Venetian force landed on Lesbos, off north-west Anatolia, but was driven off.⁶² In the following year Venetian forces landed on the south-western coast of Anatolia at Fethiye (Makri) and pillaged the surrounding area.⁶³ Despite the assistance of its allies Venice could not improve upon these paltry shows of strength; it sued for a peace, and a treaty concluded in 1503 saw Bayezid closer to attaining his goal of driving Venice out of the Balkans.

Sea-power had won the Venetian war for Bayezid, and as its end approached, he began a full-scale revamping of his navy. Lighter, more manoeuvrable ships were built and manpower was greatly increased. No major naval operations were undertaken for some years, but the fleet was employed to keep maritime routes open, protecting commercial and other shipping from the pirates, both foreign and indigenous, who operated in the waters of the eastern Mediterranean.⁶⁴

The possession of a powerful navy opened up new vistas for the Ottomans, as it did for other European states. After Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope in November 1497 and reached India the following spring, Portuguese commercial interests began to threaten centuries-old Arab commercial networks in the Indian Ocean; in particular, they threatened Mamluk control of the spice trade from south and south-east Asia. Mamluk naval strength proved insufficient to protect either this trade, or trade closer to home: in the same years as the Portuguese became active in the Indian Ocean Rhodian piracy was increasing in the eastern Mediterranean, and the defeat by a Rhodian fleet of a Mamluk convoy carrying timber from the north Syrian coast in 1508 exposed Mamluk impotence at sea. The Mamluks were obliged to call on Bayezid's help, and Bayezid was thus able to achieve by friendship what he had been unable to gain by force: an acknowledgement of his superiority over the Mamluks in the Middle

Eastern power struggle. In 1510 an embassy to the Ottoman court was rewarded with substantial aid in raw materials and supplies for the Mamluk navy. In addition to their expertise in naval matters, the Ottomans possessed artillery the equal of that used by the Europeans; they provided the Mamluk navy with cannon to use against the Portuguese and also sent their own officers to command the Mamluk fleet.⁶³

This inability of the Mamluks to protect their shipping against the Portuguese presented Bayezid with a magnificent opportunity to intervene in Mamluk affairs and further his own interests. His motives were various. Ottoman access to the Indian Ocean would allow him a share of the lucrative spice trade, while his support for the Mamluks would discourage them from allying with a new enemy now appearing on the eastern frontier – the Safavid shah Isma'il – and also neutralize any possible Mamluk help to his son Korkud who, unhappy with the choice of sub-province he was ordered to govern, had gone to Cairo in 1509, possibly in preparation for a challenge to Bayezid's rule. Bayezid's calculations bore fruit.

Although the Portuguese arrival in the Indian Ocean and subsequent Ottoman intervention there initiated a long struggle between the two, both powers realized considerable financial and strategic advantage from their engagement in a part of the world with which they had hitherto been little concerned. Even more importantly, Bayezid's intervention in Mamluk affairs opened the way for his son Selim's conquest of Syria and Egypt a few years later. But before that, the Safavid state of Iran presented a challenge to the foundations of Ottoman legitimacy as aggressive as any previously encountered. The struggle for pre-eminence within the Islamic world was every bit as contentious as the rivalry between Christian and Muslim states, and for the first three hundred years of its existence posed a greater threat to the empire of the Ottomans.

If the early part of Bayezid's reign was dominated by the fate of his brother Cem, his last years were plagued by the Kızılbaş ('Red Head') phenomenon. 'Kızılbaş' was a term used to describe those who wore tall red bonnets with twelve folds as a way of expressing their devotion to the Twelve Imams of Shia Islam. Unlike the Karamanids and Akkoyunlu who with the Mamluks and Ottomans espoused Sunni Islam, the new power arising on the Ottoman eastern frontier, the fledgling Safavid state, would develop an ideology underpinned by the beliefs of the minority Shia branch of Islam. Religious practice and law vary little between Sunni and Shia Islam – the main difference is doctrinal: Shia Islam limits leadership of the Islamic community to the family of the Prophet Muhammad and does not recognize the legitimacy of the Umayyad and Abbasid dynasties who had succeeded to this role.

Devotees of the ‘Twelver’ creed believe that the Twelfth Imam, the leader of the Muslim community, has merely been hidden from his followers since he disappeared in 940 CE and will appear again to usher in the kingdom of heaven on earth.⁶⁶ This creed was an Islamic equivalent of the messianic movements of early modern Europe.

The Safavid state took its name from Sheikh Safi al-Din Ishak, the founder of the Safavid religious order which arose in Ardabil in north-western Iran. Sheikh Safi al-Din died in 1334, and historical convention ascribes the foundation of the state he inspired to 1501, when the fourteen-year-old Safavid shah Isma‘il led an army which seized Tabriz, capital of the rump Akkoyunlu state, from its ruler who was his cousin. This was the decisive battle in a long war of succession among the Akkoyunlu princes that had begun before Isma‘il’s birth with the death of Uzun Hasan (who was Isma‘il’s maternal grandfather) in 1474 and intensified during the last years of the fifteenth century. The transformation of the Safavids between Sheikh Safi al-Din’s time and Isma‘il’s – from what a modern historian characterizes as a ‘more or less conventional Sunni *sufi* organization, gradually acquiring disciples and property in a not especially unworldly fashion’⁶⁷ into a state exhibiting extreme antipathy to the Ottomans combined with a radical stance towards what is commonly understood as Sunni ‘orthodox’ Islam – is still poorly understood. Indeed, using the term ‘orthodox’ to describe the Islam of the Ottomans – and ‘heterodox’ to describe that of the Safavids – fails adequately to convey a sense of the variety of religious practices in a region where institutions to enforce ‘right’ patterns of observance were rudimentary, and where popular beliefs were little affected by bookish Islam.

The Safavid order was founded in the rugged uplands of Anatolia and western Iran at a time when there was no effective central power in this culturally diverse region to impose the Sunni creed of the central Arab lands. The teachings of the Safavid sheikhs of Ardabil did not at first differ much from those of Sunni Islam. A key figure in the transformation in Safavid beliefs was Isma‘il’s paternal grandfather Sheikh Junayd, who came to head the Safavid religious order in 1447 – Junayd’s militant teachings would have shocked contemporary adherents of both Sunni and Twelver Shia Islam alike.⁶⁸ Junayd became so influential that he was exiled by the Karakoyunlu leader Jihanshah, himself a Shiite, in whose territory Ardabil lay, and found refuge with Jihanshah’s enemy Uzun Hasan.⁶⁹ Junayd won ready adherents among the Turcoman tribes of eastern Anatolia, north Syria and Azerbaijan at the very time that Ottoman power was reaching into these regions. He attracted, among other groups, the descendants of the followers of Sheikh Bedreddin, who some fifty years before had complicated the course of the

Ottoman civil war.⁷⁰ Yet, paradoxically, Junayd was among the holy men sent money and gifts by Murad II, whose father Mehmed I had had Sheikh Bedreddin executed.⁷¹

Almost half a century before Junayd came to head the Safavid order in 1447 and Sultan Mehmed II's conquest of Constantinople in 1453, Tamerlane had visited Ardabil as he returned to Samarkand after his defeat of Bayezid I in 1402. The incumbent sheikh persuaded Tamerlane to free the prisoners of war he had taken on his campaigns in Anatolia, and Tamerlane also sent letters to the reinstated emirs of Anatolia asking them to exempt these former captives from taxation. Presumably this, too, fostered an inclination among them and their descendants in favour of the Safavids.⁷²

Like Mehmed II before him, Isma'il was very young when he came to the throne and again, like Mehmed, was encouraged by his advisers towards the direction he took. His aggressive adoption of an ideology for the Safavids which contrasted so markedly with that of the Ottomans was a political move with a stark religious dimension that polarized the two states and exacerbated their territorial rivalry in eastern Anatolia. To the extent that Uzun Hasan's challenge to Sultan Mehmed II had been religious, it was a challenge for primacy in the Sunni Islamic world. Competition for power in eastern Anatolia and beyond was about to become more intense and vicious than ever before. Dissidents in the region saw the Ottomans as a westward-looking Byzantine-Balkan power,⁷³ particularly after the capture of Constantinople, and turned east for salvation. Isma'il's message provided an avenue of protest for these reluctant subjects of the sultan – in particular the nomadic Turcoman tribes of the mountainous rim of Anatolia, whose loyalty to the Ottomans was demanded merely as the result of accidental conquest – allowing them to voice their preference for a state which extolled the virtues of rebellion. The danger for the Ottomans was that Isma'il's new populist creed attracted those whose religious and political beliefs were poorly-defined and who saw little place for themselves in the centralized Ottoman regime being built on the ruins of other Anatolian emirates which had once seemed equally viable. The disenfranchised tribal populations of the Ottoman-Iranian borderlands were a liability for the Ottomans who, while they did not want them participating in the running of their state, did not want to lose them to the Safavids who would use them to promote their own military and political interests.⁷⁴

Safavid doctrine declared that the shah was the reincarnation of the Prophet Muhammad's son-in-law and cousin, Imam 'Ali – succession from 'Ali, at the least, was a necessary condition for succession to the imamate – who was himself the manifestation of God in human form.⁷⁵

and western travellers who visited Iran in the early sixteenth century reported that Isma'il was revered by his followers as a god.⁷⁶ The term Kızılbaş was first used in the time of Isma'il's father Sheikh Haydar. Shah Isma'il's proclamation that with the establishment of the Safavid state his adherents had at last found a territory they could call their own led thousands to rally to him in expectation of the imminent reappearance of the Twelfth Imam. He wrote of his followers that 'no one can be a Kızılbaş unless his heart is pure and his bloody entrails are like rubies'.⁷⁷ In 1502 a rumour that there were some 5,000 Kızılbaş in Istanbul prompted Sultan Bayezid to take the first measures to suppress their activity by closing the city gates and arresting suspects. Fearing that Kızılbaş sympathizers would take refuge with Isma'il, he banned movement across the Ottoman-Safavid frontier – but to little effect.⁷⁸

While he was prince-governor of Amasya, Bayezid had patronized the emerging Halveti order of dervishes whose sheikhs had had links with Uzun Hasan and whose teachings had certain features in common with Safavid doctrine. Mehmed II, who was suspicious of holy men from the eastern provinces, had expelled an influential Halveti sheikh from Istanbul, but when he succeeded his father Bayezid invited one of the Sheikh's foremost pupils to settle in the capital, and the order flourished.⁷⁹ Bayezid's own mystical leanings may explain in part, at least, why he was anxious to avoid open conflict with his new Safavid neighbour. In the winter of 1504–5 he wrote to Isma'il to condemn his treatment of Sunni Muslims, warning him that good relations could develop only if such persecution stopped.⁸⁰ A raid into Safavid territory in 1505 by Bayezid's son Selim provoked only a mild reaction from Isma'il; the mutual wariness of Isma'il and Bayezid was still apparent in 1507, when Bayezid gave his tacit blessing to Isma'il to allow him to cross Ottoman territory to campaign against the emirate of Dulkadir.⁸¹ Like Uzun Hasan before him, Isma'il had for some time been in contact with Venice⁸² in the hope of initiating an anti-Ottoman alliance, but without success; in 1508, for example, when he renewed proposals for an alliance, Venice demurred on the grounds that it had to honour its peace treaty with the Ottomans.⁸³ Shah Isma'il gradually brought the former Akkoyunlu territories under his rule and by 1508 had reached Iraq and taken Baghdad, the former seat of the caliphate.

Bayezid's disinclination to provoke Shah Isma'il contrasted with his son Prince Selim's eagerness to confront what he saw as the menace of the Kızılbaş. Selim, the third of Bayezid's four surviving sons* and for many

* Sultan Bayezid had eight sons and seventeen daughters. In 1510 his surviving sons were Ahmed, Korkud, Selim and Şehinşah; Abdullah, Mahmud, Mehmed and Alemşah had died earlier.

years prince-governor of the province of Trabzon on the impoverished borderlands of the empire where the threat posed by the Kızılbaş to the integrity of the Ottoman domains was most evident, was infuriated by his father's inactivity.⁸⁴ This tension between father and son was exacerbated in 1510 when Bayezid reprimanded Selim for defeating an army led by Isma'il's brother that was marching on Trabzon itself.⁸⁵ In the same year in a letter to his father, Selim complained bitterly about Trabzon - its inhospitality, the lack of ready supplies, and the unproductivity of the lands Bayezid had assigned for his support:

Since no grain ripens in this province and there is always paucity and poverty, whoever is [prince-governor] is weak and helpless. Produce comes from outside. Thus, ever since I came here, grain has come by boat or from the Turcoman. There has never been much value to this place and nothing has changed. I don't even have the capacity to build my own boat . . . The upshot is that it is impossible to describe a situation of such neediness.⁸⁶

Soon after, Selim deserted the province for the court of his own son, Süleyman – the future Süleyman the Magnificent – who was prince-governor at Feodosiya of the province of Kefe, aided in this act of defiance by his father-in-law, the khan of the Crimea Mengli Giray.⁸⁷ Selim's disobedience to Sultan Bayezid and his aggressive policy toward the Safavids shaped the course of Ottoman history over the coming years.

In 1511 the province of Teke in south-west Anatolia was the scene of a major Kızılbaş uprising led by an adherent of Shah Isma'il's teachings to whom Sultan Bayezid regularly sent alms.⁸⁸ The missionaries of this holy man – one Karabıyıklıoğlu ('Son of Blackbeard') Hasan Halife, popularly known as Şahkulu ('Slave of the Shah') – not only incited disobedience to Ottoman rule in Anatolia but also fomented rebellion in Rumeli; several were arrested.⁸⁹ Early in 1511 Bayezid's second surviving son Prince Korkud had returned from his exile in Egypt to govern Teke, only to learn that Selim had been appointed prince-governor of Saruhan, a province more desirable than Teke on account of its greater proximity to the capital. Korkud suddenly left his seat at Antalya and headed north, and Şahkulu promptly proclaimed himself rightful heir to the Ottoman throne, on behalf of Shah Isma'il. The timing of the revolt was hardly accidental: it came to a head on 9 April, which corresponded to the Shia holy day of 10 Muharrem, anniversary of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn, son of Imam 'Ali.⁹⁰ Şahkulu was hailed by his followers as Messiah and Prophet,⁹¹ the very words anathema to the rulers of a state which saw itself as the repository of orthodox Islam. The Ottoman view of themselves as the foremost Muslim power led them to brand Şahkulu not just a rebel but a heretic.

It was a role Şahkulu was only too happy to embrace. While Prince Korkud was on the road, a band of Şahkulu's Kızılbaş followers numbering four and a half thousand attacked Korkud's retinue and killed some of his men. Local government troops who responded to the attack were forced to retreat in disarray into the fortress of Antalya. By no means all of Şahkulu's followers could fairly be described as religious fanatics: as well as peasants and tribesmen they included impoverished provincial cavalrymen who had lost their lands (to government officials and their retainers who were not strictly eligible to hold them) and also provincial cavalrymen belonging to old Muslim Turkish families dispossessed when their lands were awarded to the rising class of Christian-born Muslim cavalrymen as a reward for prowess in battle.⁹²

Encouraged by his victory, Şahkulu's army of the dispossessed marched north through Anatolia setting fire to towns and villages as they went – the government accused them of burning mosques and dervish lodges, even Korans. Their numbers swollen to 20,000 men, they passed Burdur in the lake district of south-west Anatolia and reached the town of Kütahya, where they were initially put to flight by the governor of Anadolu province whose seat it was. He then found himself isolated and was captured by Şahkulu's troops, who beheaded him, impaled him and roasted him on a spit. A sergeant who witnessed the passage of the Kızılbaş reported that they attacked and plundered everything in their path, with the collaboration of the towns-folk of Kütahya:

They destroyed everything – men, women and children – and even sheep and cattle if there were too many for their needs; they destroyed cats and chickens. They looted all the valued possessions of the [villagers] of Kütahya province – their carpets and whatever else they could find – and collected them up and burned them ... your servant Sergeant İskender witnessed all this ... the townspeople of Kütahya, in particular, behaved with great dishonour and allowed [the Kızılbaş] to destroy the means of livelihood of the [villagers] and did not [help them].⁹³

The force Prince Korkud sent against the Kızılbaş was defeated, and he had to take refuge in Manisa castle. The road to Bursa and, beyond that, to Istanbul, was now open to the rebels. On 21 April 1511 the kadı (judge) of Bursa wrote to the commander of the janissaries that if he and his men did not reach the city within two days, the country was lost. Şahkulu seemed close to successfully expelling Ottoman writ from Anatolia and establishing his own authority in the name of Shah Isma'il.⁹⁴ Grand Vezir Hadim Ali Pasha was appointed to lead the campaign against Şahkulu and his followers. Near Kütahya he combined with the forces of Bayezid's eldest

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surviving son Prince Ahmed, but caught up with the rebels only after a forced march through Anatolia to Sivas, where both Şahkulu and Hadim Ali were killed in the ensuing battle.⁹⁵ Many of the Kızılıbaş fled east into Iran;⁹⁶ those who fell into Ottoman hands were deported to Methoni and Koroni in the Peloponnese, captured by Bayezid in 1500 during the war with Venice.⁹⁷

Şahkulu's rebellion dramatically affected the balance of power among Bayezid's sons in their bids to succeed to his throne. The elderly Sultan he was now about 60 – also had many grandsons, further embittering the succession contest. The logic of the prince-governor system was that it distanced princes from Istanbul, making it more difficult for them to challenge the ruling sultan; at the same time, appointments could be manipulated so that the sultan's favourite to succeed was closest to Istanbul, and upon his death would have the best chance of arriving in the capital ahead of his rivals to seize the throne. Before abandoning Trabzon in 1510 Selim had tried to secure for his son Süleyman the governorship of the province of Bolu, less than 200 kilometres east of Istanbul, but was blocked by Prince Ahmed,⁹⁸ supported by Bayezid (who himself favoured Ahmed). Selim's own appointment to Saruhan brought him closer to the capital than Ahmed, who had succeeded his father as prince-governor at Amasya, yet Saruhan was not close enough for Selim, and before his appointment to that province he had requested the governorship of a province in Rumeli, a request that was also refused, on the grounds that it was unlawful.⁹⁹

Selim had no intention of going to Saruhan. Leaving Süleyman's province of Kefe in March 1511 he marched through Rumeli at the head of an army. By June he had reached Edirne where Bayezid's court had been in residence since the great earthquake of 10 September 1509 – referred to in contemporary sources as the 'Lesser Judgement Day' – which had devastated Istanbul and the surrounding area. To avert a bloody confrontation with his son, Bayezid ignored his earlier ruling as to the legitimacy of prince-governorships outside the Anatolian provinces and conceded to Selim the governorship of the Danubian frontier province of Semendre (centring on Smederevo). Most critically, he also promised Selim that he would not abdicate in favour of Prince Ahmed.¹⁰⁰

With the death in battle against Şahkulu of his main supporter, the grand

* The system of prince-governorships operated only in the predominantly Muslim territories of Anatolia and the northern Black Sea coastal province of Kefe. This at least had been so since the civil war of the early fourteenth century, when rebellious Ottoman princes had rallied the followers of the disaffected marcher-lords of the Balkans in support of their claims to the throne (Lowry, *The Nature of the Early Ottoman State* 141, 157).

vezir Hadim Ali Pasha, Prince Ahmed realized that his position was much weakened. Prince Selim, however, doubtful of his father's sincerity and unable to believe that Ahmed would so readily be cast aside, turned his army towards Istanbul and early in August offered his father battle in Thrace, near Çorlu, between Edirne and Istanbul. When Bayezid ordered his forces to open fire, Selim fled back into Rumeli and took ship up the Black Sea coast to Kiliya, on a mouth of the Danube. He was ordered by his father to return to Kefe. Bayezid again took up residence in Istanbul.¹⁰¹

During this time, Prince Ahmed was engaged in putting down the Şahkulu uprising, after which he moved from the Sivas area to Afyon in west-central Anatolia; hearing of the battle between Bayezid and Selim, he marched towards Istanbul, insisting he wanted to pay his respects to his father – Bayezid invited him to do so. Gathering his forces, which included tribal contingents from the province of Karaman – the very men who were so receptive to Shah Isma'il's propaganda, hoping again to seize advantage from the internecine struggles of the Ottoman dynasty – Ahmed wrote to tell the grand vezir, Koca ('Great') Mustafa Pasha, to prepare for his arrival. Against all his expectations, when he reached Istanbul on 21 September 1511 he was greeted with a janissary revolt and forced to remain in Üsküdar, on the Asian shore of the Bosphorus, unable to cross to the capital where he had in fact hoped to be proclaimed sultan.¹⁰² The Grand Vezir (who had been Bayezid's trusted envoy to the Pope to negotiate the terms of Cem's custody in Rome) was assassinated.¹⁰³ The battle-lines were now drawn: the janissaries supported Selim, and Shah Isma'il's partisans supported Ahmed.

Ahmed retreated into Anatolia, aiming to increase his support and take the capital by storm. His hopes of seizing the sultanate dashed, he openly contested his father's authority by making provincial appointments on his own account. When his repeated demands for the governorship of Karaman – now held by Bayezid's grandson Prince Mehmed, who had succeeded his late father Prince Şehinşah – were refused, he successfully besieged the prince-governor's seat of Konya. The janissaries were again instrumental in frustrating Ahmed's hopes, for when news of his victory reached Istanbul they rebelled again, demanding that Selim stake his claim as sultan and taking their ultimatum to the council of state. Their vociferous support for Selim forced Bayezid's hand and, bowing to force majeure, he appointed Selim commander-in-chief of the army. Selim set out again from Kefe, to march on Istanbul.¹⁰⁴

With Ahmed in Konya and Selim in Kefe, Prince Korkud in his turn imagined that he could win the throne by getting to Istanbul first. He left Manisa and arrived quietly, reaching the city by boat, asked Bayezid to

forgive him his past disobedience, and awaited Selim's arrival. Korkut thought to buy the janissaries' support by distributing gold; they accepted it, but when Selim arrived in Istanbul in April 1512 they backed his deposition of his father.¹⁰⁵ For the first time the janissaries were instrumental in forcing a ruling Ottoman sultan from power; but it was by no means the last: whatever the Ottoman succession practice in theory, it was the janissaries who made and unmade sultans.

Sultan Mehmed II had greatly enhanced the status of the janissaries,¹⁰⁶ Selim, who could not accept Bayezid's appeasement of Shah Isma'il,¹⁰⁷ and its Kizilbas adherents, was heir to this legacy; the majority of his troops were Ottoman by education rather than by birth, and needed a resolute sultan to fulfil the mission for which they had been recruited. Ahmed, by contrast, was a focus for those who had been dispossessed of their former existence and saw no place for themselves in the new Ottoman state. Bayezid's brother Cem had appealed to broadly the same constituency.

Sultan Bayezid had survived an assassination attempt while on campaign in Albania in 1492 when a dervish of the anarchical Kalenderi sect lunged at him, an attack which precipitated the expulsion of the Kalenderi from Rumeli.¹⁰⁸ He could not survive deposition, however, and a month later died of natural causes while on the road to retirement in his birthplace of Didymoteicho in Thrace.¹⁰⁹

In Konya, Prince Ahmed's reaction to Selim's deposition of their father was to proclaim himself the rightful sultan. He sent his second son Alaeddin to Bursa with an army which entered the city in mid-June 1512, sacking it and causing the population to flee. News that Selim was planning to cross the Sea of Marmara from Istanbul, supposedly to hunt, forced Alaeddin to retreat to join his father, who was by now back in Afyon. Ahmed summoned all available reinforcements, throwing Anatolia into turmoil: leaving his son Süleyman regent in Istanbul, Selim marched into Anatolia. Ahmed was most reluctant to meet his brother in open battle, withdrawing from Afyon to Ankara, and thence towards his former seat at Amasya – but there he found the city defended against him. He left a trail of destruction and disorder behind him as he crossed Anatolia and was branded a rebel by Selim.¹¹⁰

Ahmed next went southwards, his every move observed by Selim's spies, who also reported on the intentions of his supporters. Suggesting that for him to seek asylum outside the Ottoman lands would bring dishonour on the dynasty, Ahmed asked Selim for some territory in Anatolia. But Selim would not entertain the idea of giving up any part of his domains, and proposed that Ahmed seek asylum in a Muslim state. Ahmed's partisans encouraged him to take refuge with Shah Isma'il – who had sheltered

Ahmed's eldest son Murad since Selim became sultan – or in Dulkadir, or in Egypt. The new Mamluk sultan Qansawh al-Ghawri was unwilling to help so Ahmed retired to Dulkadir for the winter; Selim based himself for the season at Bursa.¹⁰⁹

Despite this apparent resolution of the troubles attending Selim's succession to Bayezid, there was no trust between the brothers. Ahmed feared that Selim would return to attack him in the spring and Selim learned that Ahmed was negotiating with Shah Isma'il.¹¹⁰ Ahmed again turned his forces against Amasya; this time the city surrendered to him, and in the first days of 1513 he left his fourth son Osman there as regent. He had received a number of letters encouraging him to think the sultanate could still be his, and it may be that he believed them, but they were a trap laid for him by Selim. Bent on reaching Bursa, Ahmed marched across northern Anatolia, encountering resistance as he went.¹¹¹

Following Bayezid's death, Selim had humoured Korkud for a while. His brother was allowed to return to Manisa, from where he made repeated requests for an appointment to the island of Lesbos which Selim refused. Korkud changed his plea to the lands of Teke or Alanya, which were also refused; Selim feared that from these places on the south Anatolian coast he might, like their uncle Cem, flee to Egypt, and become the figurehead of a European crusade.¹¹² Early in 1513 Selim travelled south on the pretext of a hunting expedition and attacked Manisa. Korkud escaped the city and was later found hiding in a cave; he was sent to Bursa, and strangled on 13 March; he was in his mid-forties.¹¹³

On 4 April 1513 Selim marched from Bursa with his army, and joined battle with Ahmed at Yenişehir eleven days later. Ahmed was captured after a fall from his horse, and strangled. Amasya was soon retaken from his son Osman, who shared the fate of his cousins – the remaining sons of Korkud, Ahmed and Selim's late brothers Mahmud, Alemşah and Şehinşah – who had been executed a short time earlier.¹¹⁴ The tombs of these many grandsons of Bayezid are still to be seen in Bursa and Amasya.

Now secure on the throne, Sultan Selim I was free to impose his own solution to the problem of the Kızılbaş which had in part provoked his usurpation of the throne. During the last years of Bayezid's reign Selim's open challenge to his father's authority had motivated some other members of the Ottoman dynasty to side with the Kızılbaş – his brother Şehinşah had seemed ready to join those rebelling in the name of Şahkulu, but had died before his sympathy had turned to action. Prince Ahmed's son Murad had sympathized with the Kızılbaş to such an extent that from the summer of 1511, when his father was appointed to campaign against Şahkulu and Murad became governor at Amasya in his place, he adopted their red head-

gear. Even as Şahkulu's forces were devastating wide swathes of western Anatolia, Kızılbaş sympathizers were propagandizing among the population of north-central Anatolia; indeed, the uprising had spread here too.¹¹⁵

For years the Safavids and their sympathizers had been trying to subvert Ottoman political authority in Anatolia; having disposed of the rivals for power within his own family, Sultan Selim readied himself to take on Shah Isma'il himself. Single-mindedly he prepared for what would clearly be a difficult campaign: the distance to be travelled by the army was great, the terrain inhospitable, and the Kızılbaş hostile. In the spring of 1514 he crossed the Bosphorus to begin the long journey eastwards.

Like Sultan Mehmed II on the eve of the siege of Constantinople, Selim I renewed treaties with European states – Venice and Poland – and with the Mamluks, hoping thereby to avert any risk of war on two fronts. Agreement with Hungary proved more difficult, even though both parties knew it to be to their mutual advantage. The Hungarian envoy was held hostage and with his suite was taken on Selim's campaigns in Iran and afterwards in Syria and Egypt, where, for the purpose of demonstrating Selim's enormous power, he was paraded to observers as the Hungarian king.¹¹⁶

In Islamic law, the only allowable justification for the war of Muslim against Muslim is a religious one, 'to enforce the sacred law or to check transgressions against it';¹¹⁷ Ottoman campaigns therefore required sanction in the form of an opinion expressed by the religious authorities that the proposed foe had departed from the path of true Islam. When the Anatolian emirates came under Ottoman sovereignty as the result of territorial disputes, chroniclers had been eager to provide the conquerors with due provocation. The struggle with the Safavids was clearly going to be not only logically taxing but, without doctrinal sanction, illicit. The Ottoman quarrel was cloaked accordingly in religious rhetoric, their claim to be the repository of 'right religion' – in distinction to the errant Safavids – duly emphasized. As the propaganda battle against the Safavids intensified, a new vocabulary was employed to describe Isma'il's adherents:

... according to the prescripts of the holy law . . . we give an opinion according to which [the Kızılbaş whose chief is Isma'il of Ardabil] are unbelievers and heretics. Any who sympathize with them and accept their false religion or assist them are also unbelievers and heretics. It is a necessity and a divine obligation that they be massacred and their communities be dispersed.¹¹⁸

The scholar-historian Kemalpaşazade (who during the succeeding reign of Sultan Süleyman I held the highest office in the Ottoman religious hierarchy, that of sheikhulislam) stated the matter more forcefully yet: in his opinion, war against the Kızılbaş was counted 'holy war', of equivalent

merit to war against the non-Muslim enemies of Islam.¹¹⁹ The outright condemnation of the Safavids in Ottoman sources is in surprising contrast to the respectful terms in which Safavid historians referred to the Ottomans, seeing them as a bastion of Islam in the face of European unbelief. The Ottomans needed to execrate the Safavids in the harshest terms their religion could allow in order to justify the severity of their repressive measures.¹²⁰

Sultan Selim carried out his religious duty with brutal efficiency. Once in possession of a juridical opinion permitting him to go to war against Shah Isma'il, he wrote to accuse his enemy of departing from the faith:

... you have subjected the upright community of Muhammad ... to your devious will [and] undermined the firm foundation of the faith; you have unfurled the banner of oppression in the cause of aggression [and] no longer uphold the commandments and prohibitions of the Divine Law; you have incited your abominable Shi'i faction to unsanctified sexual union and the shedding of innocent blood.¹²¹

To reduce the threat of Kızılbaş harassment along his route to Iran, Selim sent his officials to the province of Rum in north-central Anatolia to register by name the Kızılbaş who had settled there. Many thousands of the 40,000 registered were massacred, and thousands more arrested;¹²² as a result no Kızılbaş agitation was experienced in the rear of the Sultan's march, nor for the next five years or so.¹²³ Selim also closed his frontiers with the Safavid state, forbidding the passage of merchants in either direction – this was a trade war aimed at ruining the Safavid economy by halting its export of silk to the west, but also at preventing arms, metal or specie moving into Iran from the west. As a precursor to this more drastic measure, Selim had expelled Iranian merchants from Bursa when he wintered there in 1512–13.¹²⁴

Of advantage to Selim was the presence on Shah Isma'il's eastern frontier of the Özbek state which had been a contender for the spoils of the Akkoyunlu and the Timurids which had fallen to the Safavids. In 1510 Isma'il had driven the Özbeks back across the River Oxus, but in 1512 they again invaded his north-eastern province of Horasan and defeated a Safavid army. In the summer of 1514 Selim marched on Isma'il's territory from the west. Despite having advance warning of Selim's intentions, Isma'il could do little to prepare for this encounter, and the only tactic he could employ was a scorched earth policy in advance of the Ottoman army.

The rigours of the journey across Anatolia by Selim's army to engage Shah Isma'il in battle exhausted his troops, provisions were in short supply, and the failure to reach Isma'il triggered discontent. Despite the juridical opinion justifying the campaign, there were murmurings in Ottoman ranks

that it was wrong to fight fellow Muslims. The janissaries, never given to concealing their anger, were close to outright mutiny and fired their guns at the Sultan's tent when they were camped north of Lake Van. Soon Selim heard that Shah Isma'il's forces were assembled at Çaldıran, north-east of the lake; the prospect of imminent confrontation mollified the janissaries. In the battle that took place on 23 August 1514 Isma'il fielded 80,000 cavalry archers, many of them drawn from the tribes it was Selim's mission to subdue, including those from Dulkadir and Karaman. Selim's forces numbered some 100,000 men, of whom 12,000 were janissary musketeers. Isma'il lacked not only muskets but also cannon, of which the Ottomans had 500 which they chained together, preventing Safavid advance. Both sides suffered great losses in the ensuing battle, notably among the high command.¹²⁵ One of Isma'il's wives was captured and given to an Ottoman statesman¹²⁶ while Isma'il himself fled the field, first to Tabriz and then south-east. Selim pursued him as far as Tabriz where he arrived on 6 September, and sacked the city. It was unseasonably cold; Selim may have intended to remain in the region with a view to fighting the following spring, but the Ottoman troops, including the provincial cavalrymen, refused to winter in the east and he was obliged to turn back towards Amasya.

To assuage the rumblings of discontent in the army, scapegoats were needed. They included the grand vezir, Hersekzade Ahmed Pasha, who had seen a long career in Ottoman government service since being brought from his native land of Bosnia by Mehmed II's army in 1474. He was dismissed and his place taken by the second vezir, Dukakinzade ('Son of the Duke') Ahmed Pasha – his father was an Albanian nobleman – who was soon executed for colluding in a janissary mutiny at Amasya which had erupted early in 1515 with the aim of preventing another campaign in the east; Dukakinzade Ahmed was also suspected of corresponding with Alaüddevle, ruler of Dulkadir. Alaüddevle had refused to join the Ottomans in their war against Isma'il, and Dulkadir troops had fought at Çaldıran with the Safavid shah, who had sent a Kızılbaş force to assist Alaüddevle in launching attacks across the Ottoman frontier to cut Selim's supply lines. Selim determined to end Dulkadir's existence. On this occasion the Mamluks failed to aid Alaüddevle. Dulkadir fell to Selim's army in June 1515, and the road to Syria and Egypt was open to the Ottomans.¹²⁷

In the wake of the Çaldıran campaign the Kızılbaş refuge of Kemah (Kamakh), on the Euphrates to the south-west of Erzincan, fell into Ottoman hands, as did, among others, the strategic city of Diyarbakır on the Tigris. Attracted to Selim's side by the prestige of his victory at Çaldıran, the Kurdish tribal lords of the region chased Isma'il's officers and officials from

the mountains of south-eastern Anatolia, and as Selim's grip on the borderlands tightened, the Ottoman sphere of influence was extended eastwards to the Erzincan-Diyarbakır line and into what is now northern Iraq. The accompanying extension of Selim's 'closed frontier' policy all but cut off Tabriz from its Kızılbaş constituency and the centre of gravity of the Safavid lands perforce shifted eastwards, to the disadvantage of Isma'il's Turcoman supporters.

But Selim could not afford to be complacent. Fresh problems arose concerning the loyalty of his own troops. A commander from Amasya wrote to complain that, because of the wretched economic conditions in the area, the land-holdings allotted to the cavalrymen of the province of Rum to finance their upkeep were so impoverished that there was a risk that they would be unable to make their appearance on campaign. In the days before the extension of Ottoman control over the other states of Anatolia, it had been permissible for a cavalryman to send a proxy to fight in his place; now, Ottoman law demanded that he go in person. Furthermore, land rights which had formerly been heritable were now bestowed at the whim of the sultan. Both changes, wrote the commander, were the cause of great dissatisfaction.¹²⁸

Three successive reigns had failed to bring stability to the lives of the provincial cavalrymen who were such an important component of the army in battle and of the rural order in peacetime. Scholarly opinion is undecided about how far Sultan Mehmed II had effected his policy of reassigning the holdings of indigenous Anatolian families to his new breed of Christian-born cavalrymen, but it seems that the trend began in his reign. Bayezid II had reversed his father's measures, returning these holdings to their former owners and as a consequence antagonizing those whom Mehmed had favoured. Selim continued his grandfather's policies of undermining local ties by making the sultan the principal source of largesse. In the province of Karaman, for instance, he bestowed lands on cavalrymen brought in from Rumeli for the purpose of breaking up the old order of dynastic and tribal allegiances since these were proving a stronger focus for loyalty than the new imperial order he was intent on imposing.¹²⁹ Palliatives the peasant class was accorded – such as the preservation in the province of Rum of laws dating back to the days of the Akkoyunlu¹³⁰ – were not extended to the indigenous provincial cavalry, while Selim's reforms compounded the uncertainties and insecurities brought about by the suppression of the Kızılbaş and the simmering hostility against Iran.

After his defeat at Çaldıran Isma'il assumed that Selim would return in the spring to continue his campaign, and his anxiety was heightened by further Özbek attacks in the east. Selim refused to accept Isma'il's pleas for

peace, arresting and imprisoning the several Safavid envoys (they included the highest religious authority in Azerbaijan) who came as supplicants to his court.¹³¹ Isma'il began to look for allies among the Christian powers but his appeals fell on deaf ears. Venice had had cordial relations with Isma'il from the early years of the century but had renewed its treaty with the Ottomans in 1513 and declined to offer assistance. Cem's son Murad had continued to live on the island of Rhodes after his father's short sojourn there in 1499, but had never put himself forward as a claimant to the Ottoman throne; if to emphasize the point, he had converted to Catholicism. Yet Isma'il demanded of the Knights that he be handed over. In 1510 and 1513 Isma'il had failed in an attempt to interest Affonso d'Albuquerque, Viceroy of the Indies and the architect of Portuguese expansion into the Indian Ocean, in an attack on their common enemy, the Mamluks; he appealed again to the Portuguese after Çaldıran, and Albuquerque sent two small cannon and six arquebuses – scarcely even a symbolic gesture. Appeals to Hungary, Spain and the Pope were turned down.¹³²

The Ottomans had many reasons to attempt the conquest of Syria and Egypt, and it was clear that now was the time to act. Before Çaldıran the Mamluk sultan Qansawh al-Ghawri, wanting to keep his options open, had refused to participate in an alliance with Selim against Isma'il; after Çaldıran, in 1515, he declined to enter into a pact with Isma'il against the Ottomans. Before Çaldıran Selim's attitude towards the Mamluks had been conciliatory; after Çaldıran, the Ottoman annexation of Dulkadir exposed the Mamluks to a direct attack, and the Sultan could risk more open aggression. He snubbed the Mamluks by appointing Alaüddevle's nephew and rival Ali Bey as governor of the new province of Dulkadir in his place and sending Alaüddevle's head to Cairo.¹³³

Diplomacy between the great powers of the Middle East was a complicated business. The spies and agents of each – Ottoman, Mamluk and Safavid – were engaged in an endless game of disseminating propaganda and disinformation in equal measure. In 1516 Selim's army set out eastwards again from Istanbul, having spent the winter preparing for what was clearly planned to be a major campaign. Qansawh al-Ghawri believed the attack would be directed against Isma'il, as did Isma'il himself.¹³⁴ Modern scholarship is divided as to whether Selim did indeed intend to campaign against Isma'il in 1516, and only changed direction once he was well advanced. Against this, Selim's campaign of 1514 had been arduous and his troops mutinously unenthusiastic, and moreover Isma'il had been thoroughly humiliated by his defeat at Çaldıran, and could no longer sustain his claims to precedence in the Islamic world.

Ottoman chicanery reached its climax in a letter from Khayr Bak, a Mamluk official in Aleppo, who sent news to Qansawh al-Ghawri in April 1516 stating – falsely – that Isma'il, invading Ottoman territory at the head of a large army, had ousted the recently-installed Ottoman garrison of Diyarbakır, close to the Mamluk border. This inspired Qansawh al-Ghawri to march to Aleppo to see for himself what was happening, an advance which Selim disingenuously interpreted as provocation. But the Mamluks, as Sunni Muslims and guardians of the Holy Places of Islam at Mecca and Medina, could scarcely be branded heretics even in the interests of Ottoman realpolitik, so that a campaign against them was harder to justify than one against the Safavids and their Kızılbaş adherents. Although the evidence of Qansawh al-Ghawri's purported intrigues with Isma'il is little more than Isma'il's approach to him in 1515,¹³⁵ the Ottoman religious establishment agreed to support a campaign against the Mamluks on the grounds that 'who aids a heretic is himself a heretic', and that to do battle against them might be considered holy war.¹³⁶ Selim was in no mood to let the weakness of this pretext deflect him from his purpose; the Ottoman chroniclers, perhaps because they realized that the Sultan's case was canonically questionable, took pains to emphasize that the campaign was directed against the 'heretical' Safavids rather than the Sunni Mamluks.

Armed with the religious opinion he sought, Selim marched south from Malatya into Syria, and the Ottoman and Mamluk armies met north of Aleppo at Marj Dabik on 24 August 1516. In a few hours the battle was over. Although the Mamluk army was perhaps as numerous as Selim's, they had barely begun to embrace gunpowder technology and had few firearms to face the Ottoman cannon and muskets. Panic set in among his troops as Qansawh al-Ghawri fled the field, his flight marking the end of more than 250 years of Mamluk rule in Syria. The desertion to the Ottomans of the Mamluk forces under Khayr Bak, now governor of Aleppo, was another decisive factor in this crucial battle: Ottoman cunning again became evident, for it turned out that Khayr Bak had for some time been an agent of the Sultan. Qansawh al-Ghawri did not survive, but the cause of his death is uncertain.¹³⁷

The people of Aleppo had no love for the Mamluks and rejoiced at news of the Ottoman advance; Selim's army met with no resistance as it moved south to Damascus, which surrendered. On the first Friday in the holy month of Ramadan the prayer was performed in Sultan Selim's name in the city's great Umayyad mosque, built in the early eighth century. In this way did the new, Ottoman, ruler of Syria announce his victory to the world. Selim and his advisers were at first undecided whether the army should proceed to Cairo: it was already late in the campaigning season,

and the Mamluk capital lay far across the desert. It was clear, however, that the gains already made in Syria would not be secure if Egypt remained in Mamluk hands, and Selim therefore accepted the advice of those ^{earlier} to continue this outstandingly successful campaign. In Cairo, there was disagreement between the notables over whether to heed Selim's call for surrender. Tuman-Bay, the new Mamluk sultan, was in favour of reaching an accommodation with Selim, but the war party won the argument. In a battle south of Gaza a Mamluk army under the command of the disgraced Mamluk governor of Damascus, Janbardi al-Ghazali, was outgunned and outmanoeuvred. On his march south Sultan Selim visited the Muslim Holy Places in Jerusalem, a city which, as well as being sacred to Christians and Jews, is the third most revered shrine in Islam – the site, in some traditions, of the Prophet Muhammad's ascent into heaven. A week after leaving Damascus, on 23 January 1517, the Ottoman army defeated the Mamluks at Raydaniyya outside Cairo – like the Safavids at Çaldıran, the Mamluks relied on their mobile cavalry archers who were no match for the cannons and muskets of the Ottomans. Selim briefly entered Cairo a few days later to be confronted with strong resistance which his troops could only overcome with much loss on both sides. The Mamluk commanders fled across the Nile and remained at large for some two months. Tuman-Bay was apprehended and brought before Selim on 31 March; he was killed and his body displayed in public at one of the gates of the city for all to see. Only then could the Ottoman sultan consider Cairo his and the Mamluk empire defunct.¹³⁸

Selim's conquest of the Mamluk domains shifted the centre of gravity of the Ottoman Empire eastwards culturally as well as geographically. He was now the ruler of the Arab lands where Islam had begun, and for the first time in its history the population of the empire was predominantly Muslim. Selim was now visibly the most successful Islamic ruler of his time. He had won his throne in the struggle against the Kızılbaş heresy and thereby reinforced the identification of the Ottomans, both politically and ideologically, with religious orthodoxy. Victory over the Mamluks made him guardian of the Holy Places of Mecca and Medina and guarantor of the pilgrimage routes by which the Muslim faithful had travelled to the sites associated with the life of the Prophet Muhammad for more than eight hundred years. Possession of the sites sacred to Islamic orthodoxy could only imbue the Ottoman dynasty with greater legitimacy. This sudden Muslim predominance within the empire sealed the Ottoman tendency towards fuller adoption of the traditional Islamic practices and mores of the Arab lands: as it has been recently put: 'the question of who conquered whom is debatable'.¹³⁹

Until its sack by the Mongols in 1258 and their murder of Caliph al-Musta'in of the Abbasid dynasty which had held the office for five centuries, Baghdad had been the centre of the Islamic caliphate. In 1260 the Mamluk general Baybars had brought an Abbasid scion to Cairo, but the caliphate had long since lost the religious authority it had enjoyed in the days when Islamic rulers had had to apply to the caliph for full legitimization of their rule. The Cairo caliphs lacked power, and retained only a shred of their former influence. The Mamluks exploited them as part of their accession ceremonial, and their titles were appropriated by Islamic rulers as an instrument in establishing their legitimacy. The title of caliph had, for instance, been used on occasion by Ottoman sultans since Murad II, but in a rhetorical sense rather than as a straightforward political-legal assertion of sovereignty over the Muslim community. Selim certainly made no claims to exercise what remained of the sacred authority of this office; the last caliph, al-Mutawakkil, was sent into exile in Istanbul, where he stayed until the reign of Selim's son Süleyman. As time went by, the issue of the caliphate came to intrigue Ottoman intellectuals, but stories that there had been an official transfer of the office to Selim when he conquered Cairo did not begin to circulate until the eighteenth century,¹⁴⁰ when it was necessary to counter Russian claims to protect Ottoman Christians with claims to Ottoman spiritual authority over Russian Muslims.

With Selim's conquest of Egypt and Syria, the trade blockade of Iran became easier to enforce. Despite Selim's prohibition, merchant caravans had circumvented it by passing from Iran into Mamluk territory and thence sending goods westwards by sea. After the conquest, the Mamluk trade routes both by land and sea came under direct Ottoman control. If this was a cause for satisfaction, the truth was that the Safavid and Ottoman economies had both suffered from the blockade: the silk which passed along the trade routes was the engine of the Iranian economy, and Bursa the chief market for this commodity in the Ottoman Empire. The shortage must also have been keenly felt in Italy, the end-market, where silk was much prized and where profits from the trade were vital to the economies of the city-states. Deportation was another tool Selim used in his trade war with the Safavids. The Iranian community in the newly-Ottoman city of Aleppo – the emporium in whose markets silk from Iran was sold on, especially to Venetian merchants – was suspected of maintaining ties with Shah Isma'il, and in 1518, like the Iranian community of Bursa before it, was removed to Istanbul.¹⁴¹

The conquest of the Mamluk lands promised prestige and geopolitical advantage, and opened new vistas of Ottoman expansion. Selim now had

a route to the Red Sea, and a new era of direct Ottoman rivalry with the Portuguese in the Indian Ocean began. In its heyday in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries the Mamluk state had been as splendid as the Ottoman, thanks to the revenues derived from its control of the spice trade from the east and taxes levied on locally-grown rice, sugar and cotton; these riches would now fill the Ottoman sultan's coffers. The resounding defeat of Shah Isma'il at Çaldırān in 1514 neutralized the volatile tribes of the south-eastern flank, and many of them came under Ottoman rule with the redrawing of the political map of the region. With the reverse suffered by their champion the Kızılbaş were subdued for the time being, but their total suppression continued to be a major preoccupation of Ottoman domestic politics throughout the sixteenth century.

Selim left Cairo in September 1517 and moved north at a leisurely pace. When Shah Isma'il's envoy arrived in Damascus with rich presents to express his master's hopes for peace, he was executed. In May 1518 Selim's army marched to the Euphrates, apparently heading towards Iran, but then without warning turned west and returned to Istanbul. His reasons for this change of direction are unknown but his decision may have been influenced by discontent among his troops at the prospect of another campaign against Iran, or by doubt that his logistic preparations were sufficient to undertake such an expedition.¹⁴²

Observers wondered what Selim would do next. Following his annexation of the Mamluk lands, his neighbours in the west feared that he would now turn his attack on them. At the same time, his conquest of Syria had given them cause to go on the offensive themselves, the Holy Sites of Christendom in Bethlehem and Jerusalem having fallen into Ottoman hands. Although the Christian Holy Sites had been in Muslim hands since the seventh century, except for the interlude between 1099 and 1244 when they were held by the Crusaders, the Ottomans were far more threatening to the West than the Mamluks, and their possession of these sites intensified Pope Leo X's efforts to organize a crusade. He commissioned a report from his cardinals who responded in November 1517 that there was no alternative to a crusade when the enemy's aim was the destruction of Christianity. Francis I of France and the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I put forward their views, Maximilian proposing that a five-year Europe-wide peace was necessary before a crusade could be considered. In 1518 the Pope accordingly declared that the princes of Christendom must renounce the quarrels which so often in the past had prevented them acting in concert against the Ottomans.¹⁴³

A flurry of diplomatic activity followed as the Pope sought ratification of this project,¹⁴⁴ but he was to be disappointed yet again by the lukewarm

reaction of various parties essential to its success. Venice could not afford to be involved: having renewed peace with the Ottomans in 1513 and refused to be wooed by Isma'il after his defeat at Çaldıran, in 1517 the republic had won from the Ottomans the right to continue to hold Cyprus as a tribute-paying colony, as it had done under the Mamluks.¹⁴⁵ Raid and counter-raid had for many years continued at a low intensity on the long Ottoman-Hungarian frontier, but in 1513 the King of Hungary had concluded a peace treaty with the Ottomans.¹⁴⁶ The treaty between the Ottoman Empire and Poland was renewed in 1519.¹⁴⁷ Perhaps the greatest hindrance to the proposed crusade, however, was the contention between Francis I of France and Emperor Charles V for mastery within Europe. The Ottomans were learning how to exploit the rivalry between the Christian powers, and the plan for a crusade collapsed.

In 1519 the scope of activity in the imperial arsenal seemed to suggest Rhodes as a likely target of Ottoman designs: since the conquest of Egypt an attack on this Christian stronghold, on the maritime route between Istanbul and Selim's new provinces, was only a matter of time. But Shah Isma'il feared the worst: although his former power was gone, he still had the capacity to annoy Selim and in the early months of 1520 he gave his blessing to a Kızılbaş rebellion that became known as the Şah Veli uprising, after a Kızılbaş leader from near Sivas where in 1511 Şahkulu had met his end in battle. Some years before, Şah Veli's father Sheikh Celal had rallied thousands of men to his side, proclaiming himself the Messiah and posing a serious threat to order in north-central Anatolia, and in 1516 and 1518 Şah Veli himself had evaded the Ottoman blockade to travel to and from Iran. The Ottoman governor of Sivas wrote to Istanbul of the scope of Kızılbaş ravages in Anatolia, where their sympathizers included members of the Dulkadirid dynasty, opposed to Selim's client Ali Bey. The Sultan mobilized his army against this renewed menace and two major battles ensued in central and north-central Anatolia. Ali Bey executed Şah Veli and had him dismembered in public, as a lesson to his supporters and a warning to those of his own men with Kızılbaş leanings.* Following this uprising, the commander of the Ottoman army was ordered to spend the summer in Anatolia with his men, in preparation for a new campaign.¹⁴⁸

From Istanbul's throne a mighty host to Iran guided I;
Sunken deep in blood of shame I made the Golden Heads [i.e. the Kızılbaş]
to lie.

Glad the Slave [i.e. the Mamluks], my resolution, lord of Egypt's realm became:

* Sheikh Celal and Şah Veli are venerated to this day and their supposed tombs, situated to the south-west of Sivas, are apparently still standing.

Thus I raised my royal banner e'en as the Nine Heavens high.
From the kingdom fair of Iraq to Hijaz these tidings sped,
When I played the harp of Heavenly Aid at feast of victory.
Through my sabre Transoxiana drowned was in a sea of blood;
Emptied I of kuhl of Isfahan the adversary's eye.
Flowed down a River Amu [i.e. the Oxus] from each foeman's every hair,
Rolled the sweat of terror's fever – if I happed him to espy.
Bishop-mated was the King of India by my Queenly troops,
When I played the Chess of empire on the Board of sov'reignty.
When I played the Chess of empire on the Board of sov'reignty,
O SELIMI, in thy name was struck the coinage of the world,
When in crucible of Love Divine, like gold, that melted I.¹⁴⁹

The violent images conjured up by this poem by Sultan Selim – under his nom de plume, Selimi – endorse the reputation for ruthlessness he earned himself, towards enemies (such as the hapless envoys of the Safavid shah Isma'il) and also closer to home. His treatment of Isma'il's envoys may have been a response to the Shah's earlier mistreatment of one of Bayezid's envoys, reported to have been forced to watch a Sunni opponent of the Shah burn, and also to eat forbidden pork.¹⁵⁰ In his treatment of his own ministers, however, Selim exercised to the full his absolute power of life and death over the 'sultan's servants'. His father had rotated the office of grand vezir among seven men during the twenty-nine years of his reign; of the six men who held the office of grand vezir during the eight years of Selim's reign, he caused three to be executed. Selim is known to posterity as 'Yavuz', 'the Stern': he came to power violently, and violence marked his reign. He died on the road from Edirne to Istanbul during the night of 21–22 September 1520, leaving only one son, Süleyman, who came to the throne without crisis. Before he died he ordered his leading clerics to renew the opinion sanctioning war against Isma'il.¹⁵¹

The conquest of Constantinople had given Mehmed II the power that went with the possession of an imperial city which had exerted its fascination for centuries, a legacy he drew upon in his bold claims to be the inheritor and continuator of the glorious secular traditions of Byzantium. With his victory over the Mamluk state and his possession of the Holy Places of Islam, Sultan Selim made the Ottomans heir to an equally glorious sacred tradition. Secular and sacred traditions would together sustain the legitimacy and authority of his successors.